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THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY
ON FRENCH FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1934-1939

by

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Submitted to the
Faculty of the School of International Service
of The American University
In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
MASTER OF ARTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From May, 1935, France was joined to the Soviet Union in a Pact of Mutual Assistance. From June, 1936, until the War, the Communist Party had seventy-two deputies in the French Chamber. From the time Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, France was not her usual tough self in dealing with Germany. In August of 1939, the Soviet Union signed a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany which opened the way to World War II. In June, 1940, France surrendered to Nazi Germany.

I. THE PROBLEM

Such are the facts of the late 1930's. On the face of it, it would appear that France had declined from the position of the paramount power on the Continent of Europe to one of complete inferiority in defeat. Had the French Communist Party, as a tool of Soviet foreign policy, been responsible for this state of affairs? To be more explicit, did the French Communist Party influence the course of French foreign policy during this period? This thesis will attempt to answer that question.

To the best knowledge of this writer, the question has never been treated in any single work. True, there are

works on the French Communist Party just as there are works on French history during the period and ample coverage of French and Soviet foreign relations. But as to an assessment of the role played by the French Communist Party in influencing the foreign policy of the French Government, there is a distinct gap. This thesis will attempt to help fill that void.

There is one aspect of the area under study which is outside the scope of this thesis. No attempt will be made to create a theory or system as to what the French Communist Party really wanted despite what they stated publicly to be their policy. This work will rely solely on the public policy of the Party.

II. THE METHOD OF PROCEDURE

This study will present the problem by comparing the answers to two questions. First, what did the French Communist Party want in French foreign policy? And secondly, what was, in fact, the position or course of action taken by the French Government? From the differences, if any, of these two, we can draw our conclusions as to whether the French Communist Party had any influence, and perhaps, why.

The sources of this thesis will consist of the periodicals and other publications of the French Communist Party during the period in question as well as the commentaries of non-communist observers. To this, the official record of the French Parliament, recognized histories of

France, the inter-war period, and of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union have been compared. It should be noted here that translations of French works quoted herein were made by this author unless the work cited is an English translation.

This study will begin with the Paris riots of February 6, 1934, a convenient date to begin because it was a milestone in the growing influence of the French Communist Party and because it was during the year 1934 that Soviet Russia entered the community of nations and became a more active participant in traditional international politics. The date is equally useful in that it precedes the VII Congress of the Comintern at which the new program of the People's Front was given its formal blessing. And finally, by 1934 the French Communist Party was the only Communist Party outside the Soviet Union which was neither illegal nor insignificant.

The study continues until September 26, 1939, the date on which the French Communist Party was banned by decree-law. By this time, France had adopted a firm position with regard to both Germany and the Soviet Union. She was at war with one and despised the other. The effect of the French Communist Party on the French Government during the immediate ten months of war which followed would be another subject--that of an underground activity inside a nation at war. Equally, the period between the fall of France in June 1940 and Hitler's invasion of Russia on

June 22, 1941, is completely different as is the period from June 22, 1941, to the present.

The period of this study, then, is confined to those five and one-half years before the combined policies of France, Great Britain, Italy, the Soviet Union and, in particular, Germany led the world into another and most devastating war.

III. FRANCE AND THE COMMUNISTS

The period under study is a strange mixture of forces: the policies of the Soviet Union with regard to Germany in particular, the policies of the French Government, also in regard to Germany in particular, and the policies of the French Communist Party acting in its role as member of the Communist International and as a tool of the Soviet Government. This study will attempt to show that the French Communist Party did exert an influence on the actions or the inaction of the French Government during these critical years but that this influence was not the determining factor of French foreign policy nor was the influence of the French Communist Party positive, but rather the influence was negative. In other words, the French Communist Party never succeeded in imposing its desires in a single major foreign policy decision of the era. On the other hand, some decisions were taken despite--and perhaps to spite--the French Communist Party. If the Communists were in favor of a certain course of action, then in most cases affecting the

security of France, the control of Germany, Italy or the Soviet Union, the French Government would choose the opposite course of action. If the Communists were in agreement with the Government, then the course of action was suspect, had to be wrong. Generally, whatever the Communists wanted, they did not get.

The author is tempted to ask himself if the foreign policy of France would not have been much different during this period if it were not for the presence, the size and the power of the French Communist Party. The answer seems to be yes, but this is not to say that the Communists were to blame for the policies which led to the utter defeat of France. Far from it. The prime culprit of the period seems to be the unhappy political, social and economic straits not only of France, but of most of the industrialized world. This culprit led to the Fascist regime in Italy and the polarization of political thought in Germany, Spain and France in the twenties and thirties. In France, the search for drastic remedies gave birth to or revitalized such organizations as L'Action Francaise (Fascist oriented Royalists and Catholics), the Croix de Feu of Colonel de la Rocque (somewhat Nazi), the French Popular Party of ex-Communist Jacques Doriot (definitely pro-Nazi), and the vitriolic French Communist Party.

Social and economic strife was rampant in the 1-30's. Even the United States was not free from it. Americans had their Huey Long, William Lemke, Earl Browder, Father Coughlin,

and Doctor Townsend. Happily, in the United States no extreme measures of fascism or communism were taken. Had the Communist Party of the United States held seventy-two seats in the Congress, the New Deal program would, most likely, never have been enacted simply because that program would have been supported by the Communists and therefore regarded by the conservatives and moderates as 'selling out' to Russia. But because the Communist Party was not a threat to the United States, Roosevelt's program could be enacted without the majority of Americans fearing a surrender to communism.

Viewed in this light, the foreign policies of the Third French Republic might have been different had it not been for the French Communist Party. But not entirely different. The social, economic and political plight of France in this period would still have caused a polarization of French politics to both extremes of the political spectrum. The French cabinets would still have been shaky. Another scapegoat would have been found to replace the role of the French Communist Party. Vested interests of the Right and Left would have caused pressures not in the best interests of the Republic. The French Communist Party was a most convenient and vulnerable scapegoat. It had a record for being unpatriotic despite its volte-face in 1934-1935. Communists had been ardent pacifists although they had preached revolution in matters domestic and advocated a

Soviet type government. They could not erase their reputation for being the instrument of a foreign power.

"Convenient scapegoat" is therefore perhaps the best label to describe the French Communist Party during these years. Be it a strike or a riot, the Communists could be blamed. If the Communists were in favor of strong action by the League of Nations, the Right could claim that the Communists were unpatriotic. If the Communists were in favor of strong action against Italy during the Abyssinian War, then the Centre could believe the charge of "warmongers" emanating from the pro-Italian newspapers. If the French Communists were in favor of a strong Franco-Soviet Mutual Assistance Pact, then such a pact had to be watered down and not permitted to be too effective lest perhaps the Communist Party gain a feather for its cap, or the Republic become too involved with the Red Menace. The best way for enemies of the Communist Party to handle the situation was to try to "lose" the pact, subject it to an unusual process of ratification and then virtually forget about it. This was done.

When Germany, the arch-enemy of France, militarized the Rhineland in violation of the Treaties of Versailles and Locarno, and the French Government actually lacked the will to do something about it, then a convenient excuse was to remain inactive because action would please the Communists and the Soviet Union. If the neighboring Republic of Spain was under attack by rebels, aided by foreign and fascist governments, action to assist the constituted government was

virtually impossible because the Communists and the Soviet Union are in sympathy with the Republican government.

By the late 1930's, France had set up a pattern of following the lead of Great Britain. Austria was annexed. Czechoslovakia was extinguished. The French Communist Party was against these actions, the Soviet Union protested. Until the end of August, 1939, the French Communist Party urged the defense of Poland. Here, for once, the French Government and the Party agreed. But the Soviet Union had decided by this time to make other plans, and to make the score of disagreement between the Party and the French Government almost perfect, the Party reversed itself in mid-September, 1939, and denounced France's defense of the 'artificial' Polish state.

There were other very important influences on French foreign policy between 1934 and 1939. Great Britain was a prime influence. As a matter of historical fact, France followed in the wake of British policy from the sanctions against Italy through to the declaration of war against Germany. At this point, France was exactly three hours behind in Britain's wake. But here too, the influence of the French Communist Party was reflected: Tory distrust and suspicion of the Popular Front, Communist activities in Spain, and the anti-appeasement attitude of the French Communists.

Germany was a prime object and, in a very real sense, a motivating influence on French foreign policy. Diplomatic

moves and intense propaganda by Germany had their effect. Indeed, the French Communist Party was a prime target for this propaganda and once again a convenient scapegoat.

Even the United States was an influence although primarily a negative one. Had the United States chosen to involve itself in the problems of Europe, some Frenchmen habitually in the Centre might not have feared Russia and communism so much and might not have been attracted so strongly to fascism as "the wave of the future."

France lacked trusted and strong leaders at this time in her history. There was no Clemenceau or Poincare. Individual party leaders were generally unknown outside their own party. Even in the 1930's, Pierre Laval was noted for being "shifty." Leon Blum, while sincere, lacked force. Daladier had a reputation for being a "strong man." Chautemps, Flandin and Sarraut never enjoyed wide confidence. Therein lies another contributing factor.

The French Communist Party was an influence, then, but not the sole or determining influence, on French foreign relations during this period. The mode or manner of influence was to cause the French Government to be more appeasing toward Germany and more inimical toward the Soviet Union than would have been the case had there been a French Communist Party of negligible strength. That proposition will be defended in the following pages.

CHAPTER II

THE FRANCO-SOVIET PACT

From the Paris riots of early 1934 to the occupation of the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland by German troops in March, 1936, the world witnessed a change of outlook on world affairs by the Soviet Union and the beginnings of the rise of German military might. It was during this period that Mussolini embarked on his conquest of Ethiopia in a manner reminiscent of nineteenth century colonialism. The security of Europe could have been profoundly affected by the agreement between the Soviet Union and France, the Franco-Soviet Pact of 1935. But because of the nature of the Soviet Union and the birth of the Popular Front in France, this pact was not taken as seriously by the French as it might have been.

I. THE PARIS RIOT OF 1934

In Paris, on the evening of February 6, 1934, a riot broke out on the Place de la Concorde. Fourteen rioters and one policeman were killed and 1,350 injured as the rioters tried to cross the bridge to the Chamber of Deputies where Edouard Daladier, Premier for less than a week, had been howled down repeatedly that day by the Right and

Communist Deputies when he presented his new cabinet.¹ The cause of the riot seems to have been the escalation of a protest demonstration by Rightist groups over the Stavisky scandal² and rumors of a coup by the Daladier government. The riot was neither Communist inspired nor a Fascist plot.³ Franz Borkenau calls it "one of the many convulsions shaking Europe in the wake of Hitler's advent to power."⁴ The episode resulted in bringing down the Daladier government. It was not the riot, however, which was significant, but the consequences of it which became most important in the course of French politics in the years which followed. For the French Communist Party, it was an opportunity which they

¹Paul A. Gagnon, France Since 1789 (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 383.

²Serge Alexandre Stavisky was a financial adventurer who had engaged in many and varied schemes of dubious or outright illegal character. After his arrest in late December, 1933, his connections with leading politicians, high government officials and the police gave rise to a storm of protest. After escaping from custody, he was found dead with a bullet in his head on January 8, 1934. The police reported it as a suicide, but the rumor was that the police had purposely silenced him. See William L. Shirer, Midcentury Journey (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), pp. 86-87, for a short but vivid account.

³Alexander Werth, The Twilight of France 1933-1940, ed. with an Introduction by D. W. Bregan (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), p. 15. This is not to be construed as a denial that the leadership of the Rightist demonstrators was attempting to "convince the world that the Republic and corruption [the Stavisky affair] were one and the same. Indeed, Colonel de la Rocque's Feu de Croix believed Daladier to be too far to the left. See Gagnon, op. cit., pp. 379, 382.

⁴Franz Borkenau, European Communism (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), p. 115. This work has excellent material on the French Communist Party and the Comintern.

fully exploited.

The French Communist Party was born at Tours on December 30, 1920. There, at the Eighteenth Congress of the French Socialist Party (Section française de l'internationale ouvrière, S. F. I. O.), the delegates voted to join the Third International by the vote of 3,208 in favor while Leon Blum's group could muster only 1,022 votes to reject the Twenty-one Conditions.⁵ Until the mid-1930's, the French Communist Party was not a significant force at home or abroad. They campaigned against the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, succeeded in winning 800,000 votes and twenty-five seats in the French Chamber of Deputies in 1924, the year of the victory of the Cartel des Gauches.⁶ However, disputes within the party itself as well as changes in tactics dictated by the Comintern caused the Communists in 1928 to lose thirteen of their twenty-five seats while picking up only two additional seats from Alsace.⁷ Indulging in left extremism, the party shouted slogans of "class against class," insulted the democratic Socialists as "social-fascists," and constantly called for a general strike by trade unionists whom the party

⁵Jacques Fauvet, Histoire du Parti Communiste Français (Evreux: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1964), Vol. I, p. 37. This text was an indispensable aid in studying this period. It gives considerable background on the personnel and programs of the French Communist Party but it is not definitive on the influence exercised by the Party on French foreign relations.

⁶Borkenau, op. cit., p. 105.

⁷Ibid., p. 108.

did not control. In the elections of 1932, the Party, with only 25,000 members, lost four of its fourteen seats in the Chamber.⁸ Communist Deputies and crowds alike carried on a program of non-cooperation with, and animosity towards, any government in power. Their foreign policy was likewise one of simple negation. They were not only anti-patriotic, but the French Communists "seemed to detest French patriotism more than any other patriotism."⁹ They rejected any suggestion to form a United Front with the Socialists. "Les Soviets partout!" was their most consistent slogan.

After the riots of February 6, Daladier resigned the following day under threat of renewed rioting. The President of the Republic, M. Lebrun, called the elder statesman, Gaston Doumergue, who was himself a former President, to form a government. His new "national" government was accepted by all principal factions except the Socialists, Communists, and the Rightist Action Française.¹⁰

On February 7 the C.G.T. (Confédération Générale du Travail) had called for a general strike to take place on February 12 under the sponsorship of the C.G.T. itself, the Socialists and the Ligue des Droits de L'Homme. The Communists, acting separately, called for a protest rally at the

⁸Ibid., p. 110.

⁹Yves R. Simon, The Road to Vichy 1918-1938, trans. James A. Corbett and George J. McMorrow (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), p. 142.

¹⁰Gagnon, op. cit., p. 363.

Place de la Republique for February 9. Disregarding a police prohibition, the Communist-led demonstration went ahead with full anti-fascist fury and shouts against "killers" Daladier and ex-Interior Minister Eugène Frot rang out along with "Dissolve the fascist leagues!" and "Down with the reactionary and fascist National Union of the Radicals and Socialists!"¹¹ As for the general strike on February 12, the French Communists decided to join.¹² On the day of the strike, 100,000 Socialists and Communists marched together in Vincennes. Despite attempts by the leaders of the Communists as well as the Socialists, C.G.T. and C.G.T.U. (the Communist oriented Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire) to segregate their respective forces, the working class participants were, in fact, forming their own spontaneous United Front. The shouts this time were "Unity of Action."¹³ The Popular Front of the Left was forming but not on Communist initiative. Indeed, on April 13, Maurice Thorez,¹⁴ Secretary of the French Communist Party, wrote in

¹¹Fauvet, op. cit., p. 136.

¹²Borkenau reports on the basis of a confidential source that the Comintern representative in Paris, a Pole known as Friede made the decision to participate without first consulting Moscow. L'Humanité editor, André Marty, disagreed and refused to print the party's appeal for participation in that newspaper. See Borkenau, op. cit., p. 119.

¹³Fauvet, op. cit., p. 137.

¹⁴Thorez was born on April 28, 1900, in Moyelles-Godault, a small village in the Pas-de-Calais, near the English Channel. The son and grandson of coal miners, he went to work in the mines at the age of twelve. As a young

L'Humanité that "all gossip about a marriage between Communists and Socialists is fundamentally alien to the spirit of Bolshevism."¹⁵

But in Moscow, the situation was viewed in another light. Communists in China and in Germany had learned by blood and torture that the Right of the twentieth century was not so easy to overthrow as the crumbling Tsarist regime.¹⁶ Moscow was preparing for a shift in policy made necessary by events in Germany.

II. LITVINOV AND BARTHO

On January 30, 1933, Hitler had become Chancellor of Germany. But since Hitler was hostile to the West, he was considered to be of possible usefulness to Moscow. Only a Germany friendly to the Versailles victors would be considered a danger to the Soviet regime. But during 1934, relations between the two states deteriorated. On January 26, 1934, Poland signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. In Moscow, this was erroneously viewed as a Hitler-Pilsudski

man, he joined the Socialist Party, later became one of the founding members of the French Communist Party in 1920. He became secretary of the Socialist Federation of Pas-de-Calais in 1923, then a member of the Political Bureau of the Party in 1927. In 1930, he became Secretary of the Party and was elected to the Chamber of Deputies two years later. See his obituary in the New York Times, July 12, 1964, and Fauvet, op. cit., p. 72 et passim.

¹⁵L'Humanité, April 13, 1934.

¹⁶Gagnon, op. cit., p. 385.

Pact against Russia.¹⁷ Gradually, the new German government of Adolf Hitler became more and more hostile toward the Soviet Union. The tone of this hostility grew steadily more strident, reaching in 1936 a pitch of vituperativeness hitherto unknown in the intercourse of civilized nations.¹⁸ There was every indication that Hitler intended to create a powerful German army while leading Nazis made references to the Ukraine as a field for future German expansion.¹⁹

To cope with this danger, Russia embarked on what Max Beloff calls a 'threefold Task.'²⁰ Under the direction of Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet Union sought to:

1. Prevent the new threat of Germany in the West from combining its pressure with the old threat of Japan in the East by making concessions to Japan and by promoting some arrangement with the United States, a Pacific Power.
2. Avert a general capitalist coalition against the Soviet Union by opposing with vehement hostility the still unratified Four Power Pact and by cultivating friendly relations with as many states as possible.
3. Avoid or at least delay the struggle with Germany by reawakening the old German fear of a war on two fronts.

¹⁷Hugh Seton-Watson, From Lenin to Malenkov: The History of World Communism (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), p. 177.

¹⁸Max Beloff, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1929-1941 (London: Oxford University Press, 1947-1949), Vol. I, p. 29.

¹⁹George F. Kennan, Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1941 (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1960), p. 63.

²⁰Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 90-91.

Two simultaneous paths were chosen to deter Germany. First, the Soviet Union set out to revivify the existing international organs and to turn them into weapons for the armed resistance against Germany and her allies. Hence, the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations in 1934. The second path was to complete a Locarno system of guarantees by parallel arrangements in the East and in the West and to bridge the two systems of security by giving a positive content to the rapprochement with France.²¹

As defense considerations dominated Soviet policy in the years 1933-1936, the position of the Soviet Union as the center of world revolution became less tenable by Moscow. Communist parties in "peace-loving" states like France were therefore directed to "prevent the emergence of governments ready to compromise with the aggressor."²² This became known as the tactic of the Popular Front.

The first Soviet overtures for a closer Franco-Soviet alignment were made in September 1933. But to Alexis Saint-Léger Léger, Secretary-General of the French Foreign Office at this time, the Soviet proposals seemed "cynical" and a

²¹Ibid., p. 92. A Franco-Soviet Pact of Non-Aggression had been signed on November 29, 1932. The prime Soviet motive seems to have been the desire for increased trade, while that of France was growing suspicion of Germany. See William Evans Scott, Alliance Against Hitler (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962), pp. 4-5. The text gives a step by step study of the negotiations for the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance, signed in 1935.

²²Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 93.

"shield for Soviet imperialism in Asia."²³ Nevertheless, he set to work to remove the "impossible" conditions of the pact.

In the Doumergue cabinet of 1934, Louis Barthou had become the French Foreign Minister. Anti-Communist and anti-Soviet, a man of the Poincare school of thought,²⁴ Barthou had denounced the Franco-Soviet Pact of 1932. But with the advent of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact of January, 1934, the final rupture of the 'Rapallo spirit' between Germany and the Soviet Union as evidenced by Germany's vitriolic attitude, and finally the French disarmament note of April 17, 1934,²⁵ Barthou turned to examine the state of the French alliance system. In May, 1934, Barthou met Litvinov in Geneva and the two pursued serious talks on an Eastern alliance system. It was agreed that Russia, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic states and possibly Finland and Rumania would be combined in a security pact to be guaranteed by a Franco-Soviet Pact. Such was the concept of an Eastern Locarno.

In the same month of May, 1934, Maurice Thorez

²³Elizabeth R. Cameron, "Alexis Saint-Léger Léger," The Diplomats 1919-1939, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (New York: Atheneum, 1963), Vol. II, p. 385.

²⁴René Albrecht-Carrié, France, Europe and the Two World Wars (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 256.

²⁵"France would henceforth insure her security by her own means." By this note, the French Government refused to sanction German rearmament. See Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 257.

returned from Moscow, reportedly with instructions for the French Communist Party to cooperate with anti-fascist parties, particularly the Socialists.²⁶ For the next month, the leadership of the party was reindoctrinated.²⁷ An appeal was made to all S.F.I.O. organizations and on June 23, an offer was made to the permanent national board of the S.F.I.O. to conclude a pact against fascism. The Socialist newspaper Populaire offered a draft pact which the Communists quickly accepted. The Communists had to promise not to criticize or attack the Socialists during their joint action. Thorez agreed, saying, "We want action at any price."²⁸ On July 27, 1934, the pact of unity, including the non-aggression items demanded by the Socialists, was signed. The program of joint action aimed at mobilizing all the workers against the "fascist organizations,"²⁹ which were to be disarmed and dissolved. The pact was against preparations for war, against the decree-laws of the Doumergue government, and against the "fascist terror in Germany and in Austria."³⁰

Barthou's negotiations with the Soviet Government continued. It was made clear to the Russians that on France's

²⁶Gagnon, op. cit., p. 365.

²⁷Borkenau, op. cit., p. 123.

²⁸Cahiers du Bolshévisme, July 1, 1934.

²⁹"Fascist" organizations would include the militant rightist organizations, such as the Croix de Feu, etc.

³⁰Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 147-148.

part, any pact into which she might enter must be reconcilable with the Locarno Treaty of 1925. This could be done only if France's partner were a member of the League of Nations. The Soviet Government was therefore invited³¹ to join the League of Nations on French initiative. On September 18, 1934, the Assembly of the League voted the admission to membership of the Soviet Union and that government was also awarded a seat on the Council. Six days earlier, on September 12, Germany rejected the Eastern Locarno proposal.

Czechoslovakia and Rumania favored the idea of an Eastern Locarno but Germany, in addition to Italy and Poland, opposed it. Poland would not enter into any agreement in which Germany was not also a party. Neither would she participate in any guarantees of the Lithuanian or Czechoslovakian frontiers.³² This rejection by Poland was tantamount to a moral collapse of the Franco-Polish Alliance which in turn helped bring France and Russia together.³³

On October 9, 1934, King Alexander of Yugoslavia and French Foreign Minister Barthou were simultaneously assassinated in Marseilles, France, by a member of a Croatian

³¹The procedure of invitation to join the League had been used previously in the case of Mexico and Turkey in the early 1930's. It avoided the necessity for an application by the government concerned, which necessarily would lead to formal scrutiny of that government's qualification for League membership. See Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 135.

³²Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 148.

³³Scott, op. cit., p. 188.

terrorist society. Pierre Laval, who had been opposed to the idea of an Eastern Pact,³⁴ was named to replace Barthou.

III. LAVAL AND THE PACT

Laval, who had already been Premier three times, was a longtime pacifist, dating back to the First World War. Upon becoming Foreign Minister in the Doumergue government, he sought to restore the Four Power Pact, to enter into closer contacts with Italy and to establish reconciliation with Germany.³⁵

Early in 1935, Laval journeyed to Rome where on

³⁴Ibid., p. 171.

³⁵A critical biographer points out that Laval was appointed Foreign Minister "thanks to the pressure of big business whose support was needed by the new Premier, Doumergue. Furthermore, the Germans approved of the choice, hoping that Laval would adopt a "more conciliatory policy" toward them. See Henry Torres, Pierre Laval, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 190-191. Gagnon, op. cit., p. 385, claims that Laval "believed himself capable of playing any man to his own and France's advantage under any circumstance," yet had "surprising ignorance of the world outside France and of the power of ideas." Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 266, agrees that he "was little responsive to idealism or ideology; the nature of the regimes that held sway in France's immediate neighbors left him indifferent." A favorable view of Laval may be found in Pierre Laval, The Diary of Pierre Laval, Preface by Josée Laval (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948). A more recent objective study is Hubert Cole, Laval: A Biography (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963). A contemporary of Laval wrote that he had "personal force and capacity. He believed that France must at all costs avoid war, and he hoped to secure this by arrangements with the dictators of Italy and Germany, against whose systems he entertained no prejudice. He distrusted Soviet Russia." See Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Vol. I of The Second World War, 6 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946-1953), p. 107.

January 7, 1935, the Rome Agreements were signed. The governments of France and Italy declared their continued devotion to Austrian independence and solved some petty quarrels regarding African colonies. The promise of France's disinterest in Abyssinia would have enormous consequences later in the year.

The Eastern Locarno negotiations had been pushed so far by Barthou that Laval could hardly drop them. Indeed, Edouard Herriot, who was Minister of State, would have fought any attempt to do so.³⁶ However, Laval was in no hurry.

On March 4, 1935, London announced its justification of increased military expenditures on the ground of clandestine German rearmament. Ten days later, the French Chamber voted for the extension of the term of military service from one to two years, so as to compensate for the lean World War birth rate. In the voting, the Communists and Socialists voted against the measure. Thorez reportedly asserted that the Communists "will not tolerate the working classes being drawn into a so-called war in defense of democracy against fascism."³⁷ On the day following, Germany announced her repudiation of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty and declared the reintroduction of conscription.

The German announcement was greeted by solemn protests from Britain, Italy and, of course, France. But if

³⁶Scott, op. cit., p. 209.

³⁷Churchill, op. cit., p. 131.

any nation was expected to be alarmed and perhaps take decisive action, it was France. By 1935, however, France was "in the process of evolving from the position of initiator, guide, director of European policy, to that of being the object of pressures from outside."³⁸ When the Chamber of Deputies met on March 12 (their first meeting since the German announcement), there was not even a debate on the issue.³⁹ The Flandin government went no further than to bring the matter before the League of Nations. In April, the leaders of France, Britain and Italy met at Stresa to coordinate their condemnation of the German action. They solemnly pledged their loyalty to the Locarno Treaties and the independence of Austria. The Stresa Conference gave some promise of a united Italian-British-French front, but Italy's designs upon Abyssinia were to shatter these hopes.

One unexpected result of the German rearmament was that it ruined Laval's attempts to "lose" the Franco-Soviet Pact.⁴⁰ With little hope of any general scheme for an Eastern Pact being adopted, the Soviet Union urged France to conclude a bilateral arrangement. Herriot lent his support. In April, 1935, it was announced that a mutual assistance pact between the Soviet Union and France would be signed

³⁸ Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 243.

³⁹ Journal Officiel, Debats Parlementaires, Chambre des Députés, Session Ordinaire de 1935, 12 Mars, pp. 1093-1130.

⁴⁰ Scott, op. cit., p. 227.

shortly. Negotiations as to the precise form of the pact had begun at Geneva between Litvinov and Laval, then continued in Paris under the watchful eye of Alexis Léger. It was Léger who was meticulous in working out a formula that would be loose enough to satisfy the British.⁴¹ The Pact was signed in Paris by Soviet Ambassador Potemkin and Laval on May 2, 1935.

IV. THE PACT

The Franco-Soviet Pact of 1935 consisted of a Treaty of Mutual Assistance and a Protocol of Signature. The Treaty provided that in the event of an aggression by a European state on either the U.S.S.R. or France, the two countries undertook to consult together concerning the enforcement of Article 10 of the League Covenant to ensure rapid action by the Council of the League. If Article 16 (sanctions) were brought into force against a European aggressor who was attacking either of the two powers, the other party would afford all aid and assistance in the application of that Article.

The core of the Pact and of the legal controversy which grew up around it later was Article 2, which provided that in the event of an unprovoked attack by a European state

⁴¹Cameron, loc. cit. Paul Reynaud, the wartime Premier, quotes Soviet Ambassador Potemkin as writing that the collaborators of Laval tried by every means to give the Pact a purely formal character. See Paul Reynaud, In the Thick of the Fight, trans. James D. Lambert (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 4.

on either France or the U.S.S.R., the other party would immediately give all aid and assistance. It seems that here the Russians were in favor of fixing a definite time limit but the French resisted this. The Protocol of Signature gave this diluted interpretation of the Article:

It is further agreed that the two contracting parties will take joint action to ensure that the Council issue their recommendations with all the speed required by the circumstances of the case underscoring not in the original and that, should the Council nevertheless, for some reason, make no recommendation or fail to reach an unanimous decision, effect shall nevertheless⁴² be given to the obligation to render assistance.

This left France in a position to decide freely what she required of the Council in the way of speed.

Paragraph 2 of the Protocol of Signature further safeguarded France's obligations under Locarno by insisting that an act of aggression by Germany which brought the Pact into operation must be one recognized as such by the Locarno guarantors, that is, Great Britain and Italy. Litvinov had demanded that the Locarno Pact not be mentioned by name in this Pact, but references to 'obligations previously undertaken by France . . . in published treaties which were not to be invalidated by the Pact obviously meant Locarno.

The other paragraphs of the Protocol of Signature referred to the genesis of the Pact as part of a wider

⁴²The original French text of the Pact is published in Scott, op. cit., pp. 272-275, citing Royal Institute of International Affairs, Documents of International Affairs, 1935, pp. 116-119. Selected English translations appear in Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 150-154, and in Scott, op. cit., pp. 272-275.

security system for Eastern Europe, which was still the stated ultimate objective. It made clear that as a consequence of this ultimate objective, the Franco-Soviet Pact would apply only in the case of aggression by the third partner proposed by the Pact, namely, Germany. In case of aggression upon France or the Soviet Union by another power or powers, the provisions of the Non-Aggression Pact of November, 1932, would come into force; that is to say, no assistance would be given by either party to the aggressor.

The Pact was to come into force after ratification and to have a duration of five years. If not renounced then, it would remain in force indefinitely until renounced.

The intent of the Pact was clear and its German focus unmistakable. The Pact was exclusively European as Far Eastern matters remained outside its purview. But as George Kennan wrote, the language of the agreement was "watered down to the point of meaninglessness."⁴³

Two weeks after the signing of the Franco-Soviet Pact, a Soviet-Czech Pact of Mutual Assistance was signed, on May 16, 1935, in Prague by the Czech President Benes and the Soviet Minister to Czechoslovakia. The provisions of this pact were identical with those of the Franco-Soviet Pact, but its Protocol of Signature stipulated that the provisions of mutual assistance should come into force only

⁴³George F. Kennan, Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1962), p. 286.



if France gave assistance to the country attacked. The Pact was therefore dependent on the still unratified Franco-Soviet Pact or upon the Franco-Czech Treaty of October 18, 1925.⁴⁴ Historian George Vernadsky assumes that by this proviso, France hoped to obtain some insurance against rash or aggressive moves by the Soviet Union.⁴⁵

V. THE PACT AND THE COMMUNISTS

After the signing of the Pact, Laval visited Moscow from May 13-15, 1935. At the conclusion of the visit a communique was released in which both governments expressed their desire for continued friendship, then went on to say:

It is precisely for the sake of maintaining peace that these States are obliged, above all, not to weaken in any way their means of national defense. On this point, in particular, Comrade Stalin expressed complete understanding and approval of the national defense policy pursued by France with the object of maintaining its armed forces at a level consistent with its security requirements.⁴⁶

On the day following the publication of the communique, a member of the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party in Paris explained the new policy of the Party. The peace policy of Stalin, he explained, was not only in conformity with the historic instructions of Lenin, but it

⁴⁴Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 154.

⁴⁵George Vernadsky, A History of Russia (5th ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 373.

⁴⁶Jane Derris (ed.), Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy (Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 132.

also corresponded with the interests of the proletariat. Furthermore, in view of the international situation, especially the German danger, "there is for the moment a coincidence between the interests of bourgeoisie France and the Soviet Union against Hitler and his National-Socialism, the principal instigators of war in Europe."⁴⁷ Henceforth, the Communists became "more patriotic than the old-fashioned patriots, to the surprise and terror of the latter."⁴⁸

The dictum from Stalin was the signal for the French Communist Party to cease its opposition to the two year conscription bill, to drop the old slogans of "A bas la Guerre!" It also meant that the Party should no longer stand in the way of voting credits for increasing armaments. But maverick André Marty still had fears about the presence of strong armies in capitalist countries where they could be used against "the workers," that is, the Communist Party.⁴⁹ The Party, however, complied and set about to convince the entire French Left of the soundness of its new policy.

⁴⁷ Maurice Thorez, The Successes of the Anti-Fascist United Front (Reports of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International; London: Modern Books, Ltd., [1935]), p. 34.

⁴⁸ Charles A. Micaud, The French Right and Nazi Germany 1933-1939 (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1964), p. 49. This work, originally published by Duke University in 1943, is a scholarly study of how and why the French Right abandoned hope in liberalism and looked to an autocratic regime to protect its social and economic position. In many respects, it is the opposite side of the coin to this study.

⁴⁹ André Marty, For Peace! For the Defense of the Soviet Union (Reports of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International; London: Modern Books, Ltd., [1935]), p. 17.



It should be emphasized at this point that the Franco-Soviet Pact was the work of men like Louis Barthou, a conservative who cared nothing for pleasing the Communists in France. He looked simply at the security aspects of the Pact, security for France against Germany. Laval was equally unimpressed by the Communists. There is evidence to indicate that he did not want the Pact, that he sought to dilute and lose it, that he preferred reconciliation with Hitler and Mussolini to that with the Bolsheviks. Reportedly, he went to Moscow either at the insistence of the French military⁵⁰ or because he wanted to "spike the guns of the Communists who had been opposing the extension of military service, and perhaps drive a small wedge between them and the Socialists, who still stood for disarmament."⁵¹ In any event the Communists supported Laval in the municipal elections of May 12, 1935, and helped re-elect him mayor of Auvergne.⁵² On

⁵⁰W. Walter Crotch, France Outbluffed, Current History, XLV (October 1936), p. 66.

⁵¹Cole, op. cit., p. 64. This notion of "spiking the Communists" as a motivating factor for the Moscow trip is reinforced by the report of U.S. Ambassador Bullitt which indicated that Laval had told Stalin that French public opinion would not understand if Communists did not cease opposition to the army budget and the two year service law. See United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), Vol. I, p. 277. Also on Laval's mind during the Moscow trip was the prospect of prevailing upon Stalin to loosen up on the Catholics in Russia so as to endear Laval to the Pope (and the French Catholics). The often quoted question of Stalin, "How many divisions does the Pope have?" reportedly was made during these Stalin-Laval talks. See Churchill, op. cit., p. 135.

⁵²The extreme Left, especially the Communists, scored significantly well in the local elections of 1935. In the

June 7, Laval became Premier while retaining the post of Foreign Minister for himself.

According to the provisions of the Constitution of the Third Republic, treaties which did not pertain to peace, commerce, finance, or property rights of Frenchmen abroad could be ratified by the President without recourse to the Parliament.⁵³ The Franco-Soviet Pact, therefore, could be ratified by decree. But for reasons known best to Pierre Laval, but most probably in an attempt to let the treaty die before ratification, he chose to submit the treaty to the Parliament for ratification. Between summer adjournment and parliamentary delays, it was nearly a year before the Pact came before the Chambers for debate. Likewise, Laval made no attempt to implement the Pact with a military convention. His official reason for this was that he hoped the world would view the agreement as a pact for peace rather than an alliance for war.⁵⁴ But the plans of Pierre Laval and the peace of the world were shattered by Italy's designs on Ethiopia. But, first, a look at the Comintern in the summer of 1935.

same year, a Communist, Marcel Cachin, was elected to the French Senate.

⁵³Elizabeth R. Cameron, Prologue to Appeasement (Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942), p. 122.

⁵⁴Report by Ambassador Bullitt, in United States Department of State, op. cit., p. 279.

VI. THE SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International met in Moscow from July 25 to August 20, 1935. Its main significance was to give official sanction to the idea of the Popular Front tactic.

The signs of the Kremlin's new change of policy were evident in Moscow during the two months before the Comintern Congress met. Edgar Furniss reported that the May Day celebrations of 1935 showed no signs of emphasis on world revolution and international unity of the militant proletariat as had been the case in previous celebrations. He went on to draw the conclusion that the Soviet state no longer figures as the leader of a world-wide class movement. Even the annual message of the Executive Committee of the Comintern was a rather mild appeal to wage-earners everywhere to struggle for bread-and-butter advantages such as higher wages and shorter hours.⁵⁵ The Soviet Government and the Communist International were indeed changing tactics. Fear of a reviving Germany was the prime motivating force.

Stalin's fear of the new German menace (now that Germany had publicly announced rearmament) was most evident throughout the Congress, but especially in a speech delivered by Marcel Cachin, the first French Communist Senator. The delegates heard him warn, "Comrades, the Soviet Union was

⁵⁵Edgar S. Furniss, *Patriotism Comes to the Soviets*, *Current History*, XLII (July 1935), pp. 438-439.

never more threatened than today by decadent imperialism. To stem the tide of the Nazi and Fascist menace the Soviet Union "offers its pacts of non-aggression, peace guarantees and mutual assistance to all nations, no matter which they are."⁵⁶ In turn, the other French Communist leaders spoke of the dangers present for the Soviet Union, of their support for security pacts such as the recently signed Franco-Soviet Pact, and of their enthusiasm for the technique of the Popular Front. George Dimitrov, the General Secretary of the Congress and the man who had been acting as leader of the Comintern for months, emerged as the leading character of the Congress. He too warned of the dangers to the Soviet Union, but pointed with pride to the French Communist Party as an example for Communist parties in all other countries to follow.⁵⁷ Perhaps as a reward to the French Party, André Marty was elected to the Executive Committee of the International, the first time a Frenchman was so honored.⁵⁸

The Congress closed in August, 1935, with the directive for all Communist parties "to help with all their might and by all means to strengthen the USSR and to fight

⁵⁶ Marcel Cachin, The Fight for the People's Front in France (Reports of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International; London: Modern Books, Ltd., [1935]), pp. 13-14.

⁵⁷ A. Rossi, A Communist Party in Action, trans. and ed. Willmore Kendall (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 212. This work has a particularly good and detailed account of the French Communist Party in the years 1939-1945.

⁵⁸ Fauvet, op. cit., p. 176.

against the enemies of the USSR." During the next few years the efforts by the Communist parties in this direction were evident particularly in France, but also in Great Britain and even in the United States.⁵⁹

VII. ABYSSINIA, THE RHINELAND AND RATIFICATION

The incident at Wal Wal had occurred in December, 1934, but it was not until October 3, 1935, that Italian troops began the conquest of Abyssinia. We have already seen that while in Rome in January, 1935, Pierre Laval gave Mussolini at least the impression that France was disinterested in Abyssinia. Perhaps with this in mind, Mussolini launched his campaign of conquest in the lands of Haile Selassie.

The French Government, desiring to retain Italy as an ally against Germany, held back on taking action. But Great Britain had decided not to tolerate this fracture of the peace by Mussolini, especially when the Cudan and the Suez Canal seemed threatened. Britain therefore introduced resolutions in the League Council, where on October 7, 1935, Italy was declared guilty of aggression. When the League ordered economic sanctions against Italy, France, under Laval, had no choice but to follow the lead of Britain. At least in this instance, the French Communist Party had its

⁵⁹Edward Hallett Carr, German-Soviet Relations Between the Two World Wars 1919-1939 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 117.

way. A majority of the French Right, on the other hand, disapproved.⁶⁰ When the question of oil sanctions came up, Laval objected, convinced that it would lead to open war with Italy.⁶¹ In the end, oil sanctions were never applied, and to the chagrin of the French Communist Party, Mussolini was successful in subduing Abyssinia during the following May of 1936.

The Hoare-Laval Plan of December 1935 was despised by the French Left, including the Communists. The Right generally approved.⁶² But it was British public outrage that brought about a collapse of the plan and the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare. Laval managed to endure the initial reaction but his government fell in January, 1936. As for the effect of the Abyssinian War on the French, the diplomatic historian Albrecht-Carrié sums it up this way:

Within France, the effect of the Abyssinian imbroglio was to make confusion worse confounded and to raise the bitterness and recriminations of her divisions to further heights of weakening disintegration.⁶³

The French Communist Party saw the relationship between appeasement to Mussolini and appeasement to Hitler. Communist Deputy Gabriel Péri put it this way: In France those who want to give liberty of action to Italian Fascism are

⁶⁰Micaud, op. cit., p. 55.

⁶¹Laval, op. cit., p. 10.

⁶²Micaud, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

⁶³Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 204.

the very ones who admit that we must give a free hand to Hitlerism."⁶⁴

Anti-Communist forces in France had maneuvered themselves into a position in which they were not only pro-Fascist as an alternative to Communist, but were pro-German as well.

Following the fall of Laval's government, the moderate Leftist cabinet of Albert Sarraut came to power on January 24, 1936. Besides the deep embarrassment over Abyssinia, Premier sarraut and his Foreign Minister, Pierre-Etienne Flandin, faced the problem of ratifying the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance.

Germany was strictly opposed to the Pact. As early as May 25, 1935, a memorandum to France had called the Pact incompatible with the Locarno Treaties on the grounds that France claimed for herself the right to decide unilaterally and at her own discretion who was the aggressor in the event of a German-Soviet conflict, and in virtue of that decision, to take military action against Germany.⁶⁵

Debate in the French Chamber had already been considerably delayed, as has been mentioned. In early 1936 it was again delayed by the vicious assault on Leon Blum by members of a fascist organization on February 13. Finally, on February 18, 1936, Foreign Minister Flandin defended the

⁶⁴Cited in Micaud, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

⁶⁵Beloff, op. cit., p. 158.

Pact under the principle of collective security. To satisfy Germany's objections on the legality of the Pact, the Government offered to submit the Pact before the Permanent Court of International Justice.⁶⁶ Radical leader Edouard Herriot stressed the military gains the Pact would bring.⁶⁷ On the other hand, opponents of the Pact pointed to the subsidies provided by the Third International to the French Communist Party and warned against any closer alliance with the Bolsheviks.⁶⁸

In May, 1935, when the Franco-Soviet Pact was signed, the idea of a Russian connection had considerable support in France. But by late winter of 1935-1936, opinion in the Chambers and among the public had changed. Micaud points out that the moderate Right did not object to the pact until the fall of Laval's government. By early 1936, with the presence of the moderate Leftist cabinet of Sarraut in power and the prospects of a future Popular Front government in the offing, the moderate Right feared that the Pact would become a full-fledged military alliance in the hands of a Popular Front government. They were "obviously and uncomfortably squeezed between their desire to maintain the

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 160.

⁶⁷When asked about the Tsarist debts to France and the unsettled problem of French property nationalized by the Bolsheviks, Herriot asked why France had not honored her war debts to the United States. See Francis Brown, *A Drama of French Politics*, Current History, XLIV (April 1936), p. 86.

⁶⁸Cameron, Prologue to Appeasement, p. 181n.

security of France and the dread of serving the interests of the Third International."⁶⁹ Propaganda by the Italians, Germans and the militant French Right had convinced many Frenchmen that ratification of the Pact would increase the position of the Soviet Union⁷⁰ and enhance the position of the French Communist Party.

Germany renewed her attacks on the Pact in January 1936 and it was hinted that if the Pact was ratified by the French despite German claims of its violation of Locarno, Germany would press for revising the status of the Rhineland, demilitarized under the same Locarno Treaty.⁷¹ The arrival of the Soviet army's Inspector-General in Paris during the second week of February, 1936, gave the Germans fresh cause for alarm and for increasing attacks on the Pact by the German press.

In debates in both the French Senate and Chamber, the most solid support for the Pact came from the Radicals and Communists, while the Socialists reluctantly gave their support because of the Popular Front alliance. But the French Right, 'traditionally anti-German, showed a surprising tenderness for Reich sensibilities."⁷² On February 27, 1936,

⁶⁹Micaud, op. cit., pp. 69n, 102.

⁷⁰Paul Reynaud states that the "principal incentive behind the opposition to the alliance was that Russia was Communist." See Reynaud, op. cit., p. 49.

⁷¹Beloff, loc. cit.

⁷²Brown, op. cit., p. 85.

the Chamber of Deputies finally ratified the Pact by the vote of 353 to 164.⁷³ But before the Senate completed action, Hitler moved again.

It should be noted that the Sarraut government was virtually a care-taker government. Parliamentary elections were scheduled for April and May, 1936, and prospects for a new government were almost certain. The Sarraut government was still completely absorbed in foreign affairs with the Abyssinian imbroglio. At home, economic and financial problems clouded the political atmosphere. It was in this state of affairs that Hitler chose to explode his next international bombshell. On March 7, 1936, German troops entered the Rhineland. Not only was the Treaty of Versailles disregarded but the "voluntary" Treaty of Locarno was violated.

In Paris, the cabinet met to consider the breach. The Soviet Ambassador to France had offered Soviet support to Flandin.⁷⁴ Reportedly, Foreign Minister Flandin and three other members of the cabinet were in favor of military action while others, including Paul-Boncour, were opposed. Only George Mandel wanted general mobilization.⁷⁵ Many in the military pleaded for calm, patience, delay.⁷⁶ At any

⁷³Beloff, loc. cit.

⁷⁴Beloff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 50.

⁷⁵Terres, op. cit., p. 229.

⁷⁶Churchill, op. cit., p. 194.

rate, no military plan was ready for such a contingency.⁷⁷ Speeches by Premier Sarraut on March 8 and 10 clearly indicated to Hitler that his gamble had succeeded. It was Great Britain which cautioned France against doing anything "irreparable." "British opinion, with surprising unanimity, was ready to accept this German action as basically and morally sound."⁷⁸ The heart of the matter was that France was weak internally and the domestic state of France was paramount. The government considered that it could not afford the mobilization psychologically (dreaded memories of what mobilization did in 1914) and financially (the value of the franc was already precarious). Germany sought to ease the tenseness of the situation by declaring that she had no more territorial ambitions in the West and offered the French a treaty. In the end France did nothing but protest and reinforce the garrisons of the Maginot Line with "a few colonial regiments."⁷⁹

It was only after the remilitarization of the Rhineland by Hitler that the French Senate, by the vote of 231 to 52, ratified the Franco-Soviet Pact on March 12, 1936. Not unexpectedly, the Central Committee of the Soviet Union duly

⁷⁷Anthony Eden, Facing the Dictators (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p. 389.

⁷⁸Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 297.

⁷⁹André Simon, J'Accuse! The Men Who Betrayed France (New York: Dial Press, 1940), p. 162.

ratified the Pact on March 26.⁸⁰

The rejection of the Franco-Soviet Pact by so many of the French Right is significant in that it revealed a break in the traditional policy of these French nationalists. This rejection, says Micaud, "may be interpreted as the prelude to the appeasement of Germany at the expense of Eastern Europe."⁸¹ The security of France had been, until 1935, almost the sole aim of French nationalism. Germany had been the perennial enemy of France, particularly hated because of the German invasions in the wars of 1870 and 1914. The post World War I policies of France sought to maintain military superiority over Germany and to maintain a system of alliances in Eastern and Western Europe to keep Germany in check. The failure of France to prevent the rearmament of Germany in 1935, the failure of France to prevent the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, and the failure of the French Nationalists or Right to support the ratification of the Pact with the Soviet Union were major turning points in the traditional policy of France. France was no longer the foremost power on the Continent of Europe.

The presence of the French Communist Party was certainly a factor in the change of outlook by the French Right. The threat of war in Eastern Europe seemed high to a portion of the Right and neither Poland nor Russia merited the risk

⁸⁰Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 160; Vol. II, p. 53.

⁸¹Micaud, op. cit., p. 70.

of French involvement in that war. The Soviet bid for collective security or bilateral pacts was viewed as a new Russian tactic to dominate the future governments of France.

This fear was accentuated by:

1. The formation of the Popular Front.
2. The electoral successes of the Left, especially the Communists, in the local elections of 1935.
3. The abrupt reversal of the foreign and domestic policies of the Communist Party since 1934-1935.⁸²

This fear, then, was the influence of the French Communist Party. It caused the Right to steer clear of association with Moscow at almost any price. Had the French Communist Party been as insignificant as it was in 1932, chances are that the French Right would not have opposed the Pact with Moscow, certainly not as fiercely as it did. The Pact was indeed ratified but subsequent events, namely, the Popular Front victory in the spring of 1936 and the Spanish Civil War of that summer, caused the French Right to re-double its fear of communism. This fear contributed heavily in preventing the Pact from attaining any military or political significance. Such a Franco-Soviet arrangement might have deterred Hitler from embarking on his plans of expansion.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 83-84.

CHAPTER III

THE POPULAR FRONT

For nearly two years, France subjected herself to the government of men who had joined together in a Popular Front against the rising tide of fascism in Europe. Although conceived in good faith, this Popular Front was unable to resolve the unrest at home or to arrest the downward trend of the position of France in world affairs.

I. THE ELECTIONS OF 1936

It has been mentioned that a Pact of United Action was signed by the Socialists and Communists on July 27, 1934. As early as October 10, 1934, Thorez proposed in the name of the Central Committee of the Party that the Communist-Socialist alliance be expanded to the right so as to include the middle classes. His proposal was to create un vaste rassemblement populaire pour la paix, pour la liberte et pour la paix.¹ Later that same month, Thorez publicly invited the Radicals to join a common program but they were reluctant to do so. But informal cooperation in the municipal elections in Paris between the Communists, Socialists

¹Jacques Fauvet, Histoire du Parti Communiste Français (Evreux: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1964), Vol. I, p. 155.

and Radicals proved highly successful in May, 1935. On June 28, 1935, Communist Thorez, Socialist Blum and Radical Daladier spoke from the same platform at a meeting celebrating the May electoral successes. During the Bastille Day celebrations of July 14 that summer, the three parties and forty-five² other organizations took part in a joint demonstration which peacefully rivalled a similar demonstration by the Rightist leagues. Ten thousand representatives sang the Marseillaise and the Internationale as the French Tricolor and the Red flag of the Communists flew side by side.³ As the year went on, the increase in the activities of the Fascist leagues during the latter half of Laval's Premiership tended to bring the parties closer together. On January 11, 1936, the Rassemblement Populaire, formally organized with the addition of the Radical-Socialists of Daladier and Herriot, the smaller Socialist-Republican Party, the two major trade union organizations and a few smaller groups, announced its formation and made known its program. This action was followed in March by the merging of the C.G.T.U. with the C.G.T. which unified the two labor organizations.

The economic depression of the 1930's came somewhat later to France than to most other European countries. As a result, France had enacted less social legislation for the

²Maurice Thorez, France Today and the People's Front, trans. Emile Burns (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1936), p. 188.

³Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 165-167.

workers' protection than other industrialized nations. When the impact of the depression finally struck France in the mid-1930's, the atmosphere was ripe for bitter class feeling and a polarization of the electorate. Fascist organizations appealed to the discontent of all classes, especially the lower middle class, and won considerable support. On the other side of the spectrum, the Popular Front parties, especially the Communists and the Socialists, reminded the workers that for years they had suffered from unemployment, low wages and a steady drop in the standard of living. The solution, they advised, was in electing a Popular Front Chamber of Deputies in 1936 which would enact the necessary social legislation, such as the forty hour week, and implement a foreign policy for the "Defense of Peace." This latter program called for international collaboration in the League of Nations, the use of sanctions, nationalization of war industries and the extension of a system of pacts, open to all nations, on the lines of the Franco-Soviet Pact.⁴

Enthusiasm for the coming elections was high. Reporter Alexander Werth noted that in the days before the elections he would journey to outlying villages and there find "a Communist meeting, a Socialist meeting and a Croix de Feu meeting."⁵ The Communists, in their new-found

⁴Geoffrey Fraser and Thadée Natanson, Leon Blum, Man and Statesman (New York: J. B. Lippencott Company, 1938), p. 317.

⁵Alexander Werth, "French Fascism," Foreign Affairs, XV (October 1936), p. 142.

patriotism, exhorted the people to follow the Communist Party, the successor to the spirit of Joan of Arc and the French Revolution.⁶ They sought support from all classes, all creeds. Said Maurice Thorez in a radio speech on April 17:

We, who are laymen, extend our hand to you, the Catholic, the laborer, the employer, the craftsman, the peasant because you are our brother and because, you are, like us, weighed down by the same anxiety.⁷

The French went to the polls on April 26 and May 3, 1936, to elect their new parliament. Under the Popular Front agreement, each party was for its own candidates in the first round of elections. In the second round of balloting in May, each Popular Front party promised to support the candidate with the best showing among them in the first round, but who had failed to gain the required majority of all votes cast. In the second round, a plurality was sufficient.

In the April elections, the Communist Party polled 1,487,336 votes, or 12.6% of the votes cast.⁸ They had won

⁶Alexander Werth, The Twilight of France, ed. with an Introduction by D. W. Brogan; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), p. 72.

⁷Cited in Fauvet, op. cit., p. 191.

⁸Fauvet, op. cit., p. 191. The size of the vote received by the Communist Party should not be taken as an indication of Communist Party membership, which was far lower. Communist Party membership during the thirties is estimated as follows: 1932: 25,000; 1934: 50,000; 1935: 70,000; 1936: 329,000; and 1938: 350,000. These figures were given by André Ferrat, a former Communist. Cited in Mario Einaudi, Jean-Marie Domenech and Aldo Garosci, Communism in Western Europe (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1951), p. 71.

sixty-three seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In the second round of balloting in May, they won another nine seats, for a total of seventy-two seats in the Chamber. The Socialists (S.F.I.O.) won the most seats with 149, while the Radicals were second with 111 seats. Together, the Front Populaire controlled 389 seats.⁹ The Communists proved to be the strongest party in Paris and its industrial belt. In some rural areas, the vote ran as high as 20% for the Communists.¹⁰

⁹The final composition of the Chamber of Deputies as a result of the elections of April-May 1936 was as follows:

Indépendants républicains	13
Fédération républicaine	59
Indépendants d'action populaire	16
Républicains indépendants et agraires	
indépendants	<u>40</u>
La Droite	128
Républicains de gauche et radicaux	
indépendants	<u>44</u>
Démocrates populaires	13
Gauche démocratique et radicaux indépendants	<u>38</u>
La Centre	<u>95</u>
Front National	223
Gauche indépendante	28
Radicaux et radicaux-socialistes	111
Union socialiste et républicaine	29
Socialistes S.F.I.O.	149
Communistes	<u>72</u>
Rassemblement Populaire	389
Isolés	6
	<u>618</u>

See Micaud, *op. cit.*, p. 237, and Edgar Pachard Dean, "The New French Chamber," Foreign Affairs, XIV (July 1936), p. 706.

¹⁰Max Beloff, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1929-1941 (London: Oxford University Press, 1947-1949), Vol. II, p. 23; and Fauvet, *op. cit.*, Carte II, for a map showing the geographical distribution of the vote.

The electoral success of the Popular Front was, to a large degree, a protest vote against the foreign policies of the Sarraut government, especially in regard to the Ethiopian affair and against the domestic problems of deflation and unemployment. It was also the result of the Left rallying together to save France from what they feared was a grave danger from the French Fascist Right. The Right, on the other hand, viewed the Popular Front victory as a threat of a Communist take-over in France. The French body politic was now thoroughly divided. Each group fed its fears on the assumed intentions of the opponent.

Speaking to the press on May 6, 1936, Maurice Thorez announced that the Communist Party would call for a "soak the rich" policy as well as an extraordinary and progressive tax (three to twenty per cent) on large fortunes.¹¹ On the international scene, he demanded the application of a firm policy of peace and the organization of collective security under the League along the lines of the Franco-Soviet Pact. He called for repair of the damage caused by Laval in his Rome accords, aid to Czechoslovakia, rapprochement between Poland and other "pacific" states and a guarantee of the independence of Poland as the "gauge" of the peace of Europe.¹²

¹¹ News item in the New York Times, May 7, 1936.

¹² Maurice Thorez, "La Position du Parti Communiste Après la victoire du Front Populaire," Cahiers du Bolchevisme, May 15, 1936.

The Popular Front had won. The Communist Party had made an excellent showing. But if promise rode high, problems and suspicions rode higher.

II. BLUM AND THE STRIKES

Leon Blum,¹³ the Socialist leader, had the task of forming a government. With its seventy-two Deputies, the Communist Party was expected to insist on joining the new government. Prior to the election, Thorez indicated that the Communists "in certain eventualities" might participate in a Popular Front government.¹⁴ But on May 15, 1936, he announced that the Party would not participate in the Blum government because, he insisted, the presence of the Communists in the cabinet would be more of a disadvantage than an advantage to the government, in that Communist presence would offer a pretext to "enemies of the people" to spread panic. At the same time, Thorez expressed his hopes for the foreign policy of the Blum government. He said he did not want to see France implementing a sanctionist foreign policy under orders of "bourgeoise England" when Italy was the object, then implementing an anti-sanctionist foreign policy

¹³Blum was born in 1872, the son of a well-to-do, but not wealthy, Jewish family. A scholar by training, he was known for his intellectual honesty and sincerity. Whether or not he was forceful enough to be known as a great Premier is easily disputed. For a favorable biography, but limited in time, see Fraser and Natanson, op. cit.

¹⁴Thorez, France Today and the People's Front, p. 254.

when 'Hitler Germany' was the object. The reference to the inaction on the part of France to German remilitarization of the Rhineland, two months earlier, was clearly indicated.

Thorez went on to say:

Our faith is in soviets based on the life of our brothers in Soviet Russia. Under the direction of the sole party of the working class, we will some day succeed in creating a new society.¹⁵

Franz Borkenau is of the opinion that both Thorez and Jacques Dulcos were actually in favor of joining the cabinet, while Andre Marty was opposed. The final decision, according to Borkenau, was made by Comintern Secretary Dimitroff.¹⁶ Jean-Marie Domenach believes that the Communists did not join the government because they did not trust the Socialists and, furthermore, that the wave of sit-down strikes, already beginning, indicated that the working classes expected many changes which the Communists knew the new government could not effect.¹⁷ Whatever the actual reason, the Communists did not join the cabinet.¹⁸ Outside the cabinet, they were able to attack the government for its

¹⁵News item in the New York Times, May 15, 1-36; and Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 196-197.

¹⁶Franz Borkenau, European Communism (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 159.

¹⁷Pinardi, Domenach and Garosci, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

¹⁸Blum's first cabinet included eighteen Socialists, fourteen Radicals (including Chautemps, Pierre Cot and Deladier) and two Republican-Socialists. See Alexander Levas, Histoire du Socialisme et du Communisme en France de 1871 à 1947 (Paris: Edition France-Empire, 1947), p. 399, for the complete list of members.

shortcomings and yet claim credit for many of the popular measures brought about by the Popular Front. Blum, no doubt, was relieved when the Communists declined to participate.¹⁹

Although the second round of elections had been held on May 3, the new Blum government was not installed until June 4, 1936, when the term of the new Parliament began. In the meantime, France was plagued by a series of sit-down strikes which began on May 11. In June 1936 alone, there were a total of 12,142 strikes involving 1,830,938 strikers.²⁰

The cause of the strikes seems to have been the spontaneous reaction of the workers themselves,²¹ partly celebrating the victory of the Popular Front, partly anticipating the social reforms then expected, and partly as a means of pressuring the new government into enacting those reforms quickly. Certainly the Communists were not to blame for the strikes, but they were forced by circumstances not to object to them. L'Humanité did not begin to talk about the strikes until May 20, nine days later.²² Blum was placed

¹⁹Alexander Werth notes that Communists in the government would make a bad impression abroad, especially in England. See Werth, The Twilight of France, p. 89.

²⁰Andre Philip, "The Shifting Status of French Labor," Foreign Affairs, XVII (July 1939), p. 742.

²¹This point seems well documented. See Borkenau, op. cit., p. 160; Robert Bell, "New Directions in France," Current History, XLIX (January 1939), p. 15; and Peloff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 24.

²²Fauvet, op. cit., p. 198.

in the embarrassing position of having either to break the sit-down strikes forcibly or to tolerate them. He chose the latter.

The reaction to the strikes in the Western world was swift and pointed. The British feared that Blum had become a Kerensky.²³ Blum sought to allay the fears of France's friends by saying:

I am spoken of as a Kerensky who is preparing the way for a Lenin. I can assure you that this is not going to be a Kerensky Government; and it is equally certain that if we fail, we shall be succeeded not by a Lenin.²⁴

Even the Communists became alarmed at the extent of the strikes. Thorez commented on June 10, "It is important to know when to stop a stroke; for otherwise one is apt to play into the hands of reactionaries."²⁵ But three days later, Thorez added fuel to the fire and further embarrassed the government by remarking that the workers were taking good care of the factories in which they were conducting round the clock sit-down strikes because "the factories would soon be the property of the workers anyway."²⁶ That same evening, at a rally celebrating the victory of the signing of the Matignon Agreements, the French Communist Party unfurled their newly devised national flag of Soviet

²³News item in the New York Times, June 14, 1936.

²⁴Cited in Werth, The Twilight of France, p. 91.

²⁵Ibid., p. 99.

²⁶News item in the New York Times, June 15, 1936.



France: a red field with the traditional Tricolor in the top corner and a golden "R.F." (République Française) on the red field with a hammer and sickle between the letters.²⁷

The crowd cheered the victorious strikers as Communist heroes and cries of Une France Libre, Forte et Heureuse! and Les Soviets Partout! rang out.²⁸ Such conduct gave rise to the fiction that it was the Communists who inspired the strikes. At least, the Communists could be blamed for the strikes and be accused of disloyalty to France.

At home and abroad, reaction continued: The French Right, which had not been too upset over the results of the election in May, was now thoroughly alarmed. That Franco-Soviet Pact now took on a significance which it did not have previously. The notion that Moscow had extended and tightened her hold on France gained ground. The new French Government, it was feared, would bend to the noisy demands of the Communist Party and play into the hands of the Soviets. Germany and Italy were loud in accusing France of becoming an instrument of the Comintern and a vehicle for the spread of communism. As a result:

A part of Europe became insensibly pro-Hitler in exact proportion as--in the eyes of superficial observers--France seemed to be drifting into Communism.²⁹

²⁷ Werth, The Twilight of France, p. 91.

²⁸ Beloff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 24.

²⁹ Vladimir d'Ormesson, France, trans. F. Lewis May (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1939), p. 156.

Blum's Jewishness became an easy target. Hitler and Mussolini are said to have considered the presence of a liberal and a Jew as head of the French Government as a personal insult.³⁰ Enemies of the Popular Front brought forth a new wave of French anti-semitism, latent since the Dreyfus affair. How easy to launch a slogan like "France in the hands of the Jews!"³¹

In its first weeks in power, the Popular Front government of Leon Blum was almost completely absorbed with the strikes and agitation of the masses. With unprecedented speed, a host of sweeping economic and social reforms were rammed through the Parliament, the Matignon Agreements were signed between the trade unions and the employers, the "Two Hundred Families" lost control of the Bank of France, and the Croix de Feu and other Fascist Leagues were dissolved.

But as for foreign policy, "apart from the general ideological antipathy to Fascism in all its forms, the Popular Front did not introduce fresh ideas in the domain of foreign policy."³² Foreign affairs were largely left in the hands of the permanent officials at the Quai d'Orsay³³ where

³⁰Albert Guérard, France: A Modern History (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 419.

³¹Yves R. Simon, The Road to Vichy 1914-1938, trans. James A. Corbett and George J. McMorrow (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), p. 155.

³²René Albrecht-Carrié, France, Europe and the Two World Wars (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 301.

³³Fraser and Natanson, op. cit., p. 308.

Alexis Saint-Léger Léger was still Secretary-General. The influence of permanent officials is usually on the side of traditional policy.³⁴ In the case of French foreign policy during the period of the Popular Front, this seems definitely to be the case. The French Communist Party exercised no direct influence in the adoption of any policy favored by the Party. By no means did the Party take over the Foreign Ministry. Yvon Delbos, a Radical, held that portfolio; and Léger, perhaps a little "vitiated by his association with M. Laval" was prone to a policy of 'laissez-faire.'³⁵ Neither, as we shall see, did the government listen to the counsels of the Party in the years which followed. The French Communist Party became so feared and hated as a result of the strikes, which they did not instigate, that the Party could do no right. The first foreign policy crisis of the Blum government, the Spanish Civil War, served to enlarge this fear and hatred.

III. THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The Popular Front government of Leon Blum had been in power scarcely six weeks when it was confronted by a major foreign policy problem in the form of the Spanish Civil War. The implications of this struggle in a neighboring

³⁴John Eldred Howard, Parliament and Foreign Policy in France (London: The Cresset Press, 1948), p. 152.

³⁵W. Walter Crotch, "France Outbluffed," Current History, XIV (October 1936), p. 65.

state were to further divide the French people and weaken the new French Government.

Spain had become a Republic in 1930, but during the ensuing years troubles had rocked the republican experiment, with wide oscillations in the political spectrum to both extremes. The elections of February 1936 indicated that Spain was still sorely divided but the Frente Popular, somewhat akin to the French Front Populaire, had gained a clear majority in the Spanish Cortes. But increasing violence and strife continued while the new government seemed unable to control the situation. The murder of a Rightist leader supplied the signal for an army revolt on July 17, 1936. The rebellion would have been relatively insignificant in history had it failed or succeeded quickly. But Spain soon found itself divided into two camps and the bloody struggle continued for nearly three years as the battlefield of ideologies and interests spread outside the borders of Spain itself.

The rebellion was only two days old when the Madrid government called upon France for aid. In Paris, Blum and his Foreign Minister were faced with the problem of whether or not to intervene militarily, give assistance or remain neutral. Certainly, there was an ideological sympathy with the Madrid government. But, on the other hand Blum was a pacifist and had no desire to upset the peace of Europe. His Popular Front government was new, already beset by the domestic problems of the strikes, social reforms and currency



stabilization. Although the French Communist Party could be expected to urge assistance to the republican government, the French Right expectedly sided with General Franco as the champion of the forces of "Order" against the forces of "Revolution."³⁶ Significant sections of the French Centre as well as the Right easily believed that the struggle in Spain was really a crusade against communism. This was the stress of the propaganda organized by Germany and Italy.³⁷ There was even rumor of insurrection at home if Blum should decide to help the Spanish republicans. French Fascist and secret organizations, perhaps with the complicity of some high ranking army officers, were rumored to have been preparing for an uprising.³⁸

In his own cabinet, Blum found that the Radicals were not disposed to aid the Spanish Government. Reportedly, Foreign Minister Delbos, along with Chautemps and Daladier, threatened to resign unless an immediate embargo was placed on shipments to Spain.³⁹ Another consideration was Great Britain. Having followed the lead of Britain in the Rhineland crisis of March of the same year, France had to consider British policy in this new dilemma. Blum's decision on August 1, 1936, was to propose to Italy and Britain that the

³⁶Micaud, op. cit., p. 112.

³⁷Ibid., p. 115.

³⁸Guérard, op. cit., pp. 418-419.

³⁹Dell, loc. cit.

powers not intervene in the struggle in Spain so as to let both sides fight it out without external aid. This proved to be the first serious wedge into the ranks of the Popular Front.⁴⁰

Some writers would have us believe that the British Conservatives held the Blum government with contempt and suspicion, but Anthony Eden, British Foreign Minister at this time, stated that he had excellent relations with this Popular Front government.⁴¹ He wrote that the policy of non-intervention was a French decision to which the British Foreign Office agreed.⁴² As events unfolded, Britain became the arch-advocate of non-intervention. After Italy and Germany had openly intervened in the war, Blum wrote in Current History that the French Government maintained its policy of non-intervention because:

The French Government did not wish to suggest a divergence of opinion and conduct from that of Great Britain, since the Anglo-French alliance remains the most important influence for European peace.⁴³

Clearly, France had surrendered her position as the dominant power on the Continent of Europe and in the realm of foreign policy had totally surrendered leadership to Britain. The

⁴⁰Borkensu, op. cit., p. 168.

⁴¹Anthony Eden, Facing the Dictators (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p. 415. Compare with Dell, loc. cit.; and William L. Shirer, Midcentury Journey (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), p. 92.

⁴²Eden, op. cit., p. 451.

⁴³Leon Blum, "France and Non-Intervention," Current History, XLIV (November 1936), p. 30.

Communist Party in France was helpless to change this.

The Soviet Union likewise had its dilemma. Natural sympathies lay with the Popular Front republican government in Spain but, as Borkenau points out, if Russian troops in strength went to Spain and scored victories over the rebels, it might result in a rapprochement between Britain and Germany and between France and Italy against Russia. Such would constitute a revival of the Four Power Pact which Stalin dreaded. Borkenau states that Stalin's first reaction was to involve France.⁴⁴

For a time, the French Communist Party adopted a careful attitude. The fear of civil war in France itself was a moderating influence. After the extent of the intervention on the part of Italy and Germany became clear, Thorez warned on August 6 of the danger of French encirclement by fascism. Henceforth, the Party made all efforts to aid the Spanish republicans by all means. The first tactic of the French Communist Party was to propose a Front Français to replace the Popular Front. The plan would extend the parliamentary majority of the Popular Front rightward so as to enable the French Government, said the Communists, to execute a more energetic, active foreign policy which would "prevent France from falling in with the plans of the British Tories and Hitler." The plan seems to have been an effort by the

⁴⁴Borkenau, op. cit., p. 167.

Communists to find new friends not as pacifist as the Socialists.⁴⁵ Communist leaders Thorez and Cachin called for 'security of the Country' and strict observance of the pacts of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union and with Czechoslovakia.⁴⁶ The Socialists, however, held their loyalty with the Popular Front while the Centre had no wish for association with the Communists. The Front Français movement collapsed by mid-September, 1936.

After the French embargo on war materials to Spain of August 8, the French Communist Party increased its efforts to aid the Loyalists in Spain. On August 13, 1936, the Party addressed an open letter to the French Socialists:

It is intolerable that we should watch the rebels being supplied by Italy and Germany while the legal government of Spain sees a political blockade reined against it--a kind of sanction . . . which, in spite of international decisions was not put into operation against Italy, although she was guilty of invading Abyssinia.

We are of the opinion that in the present situation it would be useful for our two parties to make a common step in favor of united international action to support the Spanish people in their glorious fight for liberty and peace."⁴⁷

The Communists were unable, however, to reverse the official stand of the French Government.⁴⁸ There is no

⁴⁵Fauvet, op. cit., p. 205.

⁴⁶"New Front in France," New Republic, LXXVIII (October 14, 1936), p. 269.

⁴⁷L'Humanité, August 13, 1936.

⁴⁸There is some evidence that the Soviet Government was a little miffed with Blum on this issue. Loy Henderson, as Charge in Moscow, reported to Washington on September 12,

doubt, however, that limited aid did flow from France and through France to the Madrid government. Blum's own Air Minister, Pierre Cot, admits to having dispatched "thirty reconnaissance planes and bombers, fifteen pursuit planes, and about ten transport and training planes" in the early days of the struggle.⁴⁹ But such aid from the French Government soon came to a halt after the signing of the Non-Intervention Pact with the other powers. Subsequent aid to the Loyalists from France, official or unofficial, could not begin to compare with the aid sent by Italy and Germany to the rebels.⁵⁰

The French Communists, although castigating the Blum government for their Spanish policy, were not willing to

1936, that Soviet officials in private stated that France needed a leader like Herriot rather than Blum. See United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States 1936 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), Vol. I, p. 346.

⁴⁹Pierre Cot, Triumph of Treason, cited in United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities, Communist Activities Around the World (Part I, Section D of The Communist Conspiracy; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956), p. 372. See also David T. Cattell, Communism and the Spanish Civil War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), p. 80, and Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Vol. I of The Second World War, 6 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948-1949), p. 214.

⁵⁰Cattell, loc. cit. For a slightly different assessment on the degree of French aid, see Edward Hallett Carr, International Relations Between the Two World Wars 1919-1939 (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1963), p. 263. Borkenau, op. cit., p. 197, implies that more aid would have reached republican Spain had it not been for the constant agitation of the French Communists for more and more aid.

vote against the government. An appeal to emotions was substituted for political pressure. Writing in L'Humanité in September, 1936, Maurice Thorez declared:

For the honor of the working class, for the honor of the Popular Front, for the honor of France, the blockade that is killing peace must be lifted.⁵¹

Towards the end of September, Thorez visited Moscow and reportedly discussed direct aid by the Soviet Union to the Loyalists. Thorez is said to have given Stalin the idea of the International Brigades, to be commanded by foreign Communist refugees living in the Soviet Union. The idea was adopted and André Marty was soon off to Spain with the responsibility for the Volunteer Brigades, including 6,000 French volunteers.⁵²

Gabriel Péri, the Party's spokesman on foreign affairs and an editor of L'Humanité, stressed the legalistic and diplomatic aspects of non-intervention. He condemned the embargo of August 8 as a hostile act toward the Spanish Republic in violation of the Franco-Spanish Treaty of 1935. He reminded his readers of the dangers to come if France should have three borders to defend against fascism.⁵³

Meanwhile, broad sectors of the French Right and Centre came to believe that it was the Soviet Union which

⁵¹Editorial in L'Humanité, September 9, 1936.

⁵²Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 204, 207-208.

⁵³David Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals 1914-1960 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 118.

was responsible not only for France's domestic and social ills but for the "Red" Civil War in Spain as well.⁵⁴ Indeed the Soviet Union announced in October, 1936, that she would not be bound by non-intervention in Spain if other violations--by Italy and Germany--did not stop.

France continued to be viewed in the non-Communist world as being pro-Communist. The New York Times carried an article on October 4, 1936, which stated that there was no secret that Britain wanted to know how France would react in the event of a German-Russian conflict.⁵⁵ France, herself, was deeply annoyed with Soviet propaganda. The Congress of the Radical Party had voted a strong resolution against Soviet intervention in French affairs.⁵⁶ Delbos, the Foreign Minister, was particularly suspicious of Soviet intentions. He suspected that the Soviet Union was attempting to use the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance as a cover for revolutionary propaganda in France and elsewhere. The French Ambassador to Moscow warned Litvinov that the Pact would be a dead letter if Comintern meddling in France continued. Delbos did not seem to view the Pact in terms of the problem of European security. According to Ambassador Coulondre's

⁵⁴ Franklin L. Ford and Carl E. Schorske, "The Voice in the Wilderness: Robert Coulondre," The Diplomats, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 556.

⁵⁵ News item in the New York Times, October 4, 1936.

⁵⁶ Ford and Schorske, loc. cit.

autobiography, only Blum, Reynaud and Herriot gave any real importance to closer connections with the U.S.S.R.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Reynaud claims that Blum was not disposed to strengthen the Franco-Soviet Pact because his party, the Socialist Party, was opposed to the idea of war.⁵⁸

In this setting, the French Communist Party and the General Confederation of Labor continued to press the Blum government to lift the blockade. Popular demonstrations were called and the Paris metallurgical workers went on strike.⁵⁹ But still the Communists and the C.G.T. refused to abandon the Popular Front. The Confederation expressed its confidence in Blum, and Thorez, for a time, suspended his criticism of the government. But in another change of tactics on December 2, 1936, the Communists announced that they would break away from the Popular Front over the government's non-intervention policy.

On December 4 and 5, a major foreign policy debate took place in the Chamber of Deputies. Gabriel Péri again stressed the implications of German and Italian intervention in Spain upon the security of France. He urged the Deputies to safeguard the "friendly" Spanish people, preserve democracy

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 556-557, citing Robert Coulondre, De Stalin à Hitler: Souvenirs de deux ambassades 1936-1939, pp. 16, 16-18.

⁵⁸Paul Reynaud, In the Thick of the Fight 1930-1945, trans. James D. Lambert (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), p. 75.

⁵⁹News item in Current History, XLV (November 1936), p. 21.

and effect a "humaine peace."⁶⁰ Delbos reiterated the French Government's policy of non-intervention in Spain. He took note of the anti-Communist faction's criticism of the Franco-Soviet Pact but hastened to add that the Blum government considered the Pact "a pact of peace to which we remain attached and political passions will destroy neither the character nor the value of it."⁶¹

Speaking on December 5, Maurice Thorez lamented the Spanish policy of the government:

Hitler and Mussolini wish to cut off French North Africa to assure control of communications in the Mediterranean. They want to menace us directly from the south.⁶²

He quoted Hitler's words from Mein Kampf, "Isolate France to annihilate it." He went on to say that the French Communist Party, "since the beginning, has opposed and it remains opposed to all military intervention, direct or indirect, in the affairs of Spain."⁶³

On the same day, before the vote of confidence came before the group, the Party reversed its previous decision to break away from the government and announced through Jacques Duclos that the Party would simply abstain from the voting.⁶⁴ The Popular Front remained formally intact.

⁶⁰ Journal Officiel, Debats Parlementaires, Chambre des Députés, Session Extraordinaire de 1936, 4 Decembre, pp. 3318-3321.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 3328.

⁶² Ibid., p. 3364.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 3365.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 3373-3374.

The Spanish Civil War continued its bloody course as Russia, having decided to intervene but not "seriously,"⁶⁵ poured hundreds of "advisors" into Spain. Indeed, Soviet agents were in complete charge of military operations on the Madrid front. By early 1937, German and Italian intervention had assumed such proportions that victory for the Franco forces seemed assured. Soviet aid began to taper off, but some aid did continue, perhaps in the hope of drawing off Italian and German energies for as long as possible.⁶⁶ In other developments, the Rome-Berlin Axis of October 1936 formalized the Italian-German cooperation in Spain. In mid-1937, Japan began her undeclared war against China. Mussolini formalized his break with the democratic nations by withdrawing from the League of Nations in December of that same year after signing the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany and Japan. In Moscow, Stalin seemed to be pursuing a foreign policy of "watchful waiting."⁶⁷

The Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance continued in effect but without military conventions, without teeth. Soviet Ambassador Potemkin made an attempt to give the Pact a military content when he met Blum in February, 1937, but,

⁶⁵Borkenau, op. cit., p. 168.

⁶⁶George F. Kennan, Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1941 (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1960), p. 82.

⁶⁷George F. Kennan, Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1962), p. 298.

like the attempt of Litvinov himself in May when he saw Blum and Delbos, it came to naught.⁶⁸ The French Government was too weak, too embarrassed by the French Communists,⁶⁹ too susceptible to British disapproval, and too hesitant to cast its lot with Moscow to move for a closer connection with her.

IV. FALL OF BLUM'S FIRST CABINET

At home, Leon Blum continued to have his domestic problems. In February, 1937, he declared a "pause" in further progress toward social reform. To both Communists and Socialists, this caused embarrassment to their leadership since by this time Left Extremists--Anarchists, Revolutionary Leninists or Trotskyists, some trade unions within the C.G.T., and even the Revolutionary Left of the Socialist Party--clamored for more radical measures. Such pressure frequently forced the Communist Party and the C.G.T. leadership to play up to the extremists for fear of losing the leadership of the working class or being denounced as "the flunkys of capital--or of Stalin."⁷⁰ But the Communists

⁶⁸Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 92-93.

⁶⁹Right wing Deputy Henri de Kerillis is quoted as saying before the Chamber, "We will accept the Franco-Soviet Pact when there are no longer seventy-two Russian deputies on the benches of the French Chamber." Cited in Micaud, op. cit., p. 111.

⁷⁰Alexander Werth, "The Front Populaire in Difficulties," Foreign Affairs, XV (July 1937), pp. 616-617. Another author who agrees that the Communists had insistently advocated parliamentary action rather than the direct action as advocated by the Trotskyists is Dell, op. cit., p. 17.

were equally careful not to frighten away sections of the peasantry and middle class which were considered necessary for their own support and the support of the Popular Front. Blum's biographers claim that it was indeed the Communists who 'applied the brakes' to the domestic Popular Front program.⁷¹ Borkenau blames the Radicals and the Communists for blocking structural reforms and strict controls on the economy and the currency.⁷²

By June, 1937, the flight of capital from France, the depletion of gold reserves and the stagnation of the economy led Blum's government to reverse its policies and adopt a policy of controls and restraints. Blum requested full financial powers. To this the Communists rallied, and even offered to participate in the government, their decision of May 1935 to the contrary. The Central Committee had decided:

In the presence of the furious assault of reaction, the Communist Party declares itself ready to take up all the responsibilities in a government strengthened and constituted in the image of the Popular Front for the salvation of France, democracy and peace.⁷³

The Chamber of Deputies voted to give Blum the powers he requested, but the more conservative Senate refused. The Senate, it seems, was not as enthusiastic for the Popular Front as was the majority in the Chamber. Blum's biographers

⁷¹Fraser and Natanson, op. cit., p. 257.

⁷²Borkenau, op. cit., p. 193.

⁷³Cited in Fauvet, op. cit., p. 212.

called the Senate very "conservatively Republican," suspicious of "rampant revolutionaries" in the Socialist and Communist Parties.⁷⁴ The Senate would give emergency powers to a Daladier but not to a Blum. As a consequence, Blum resigned and, on June 22, 1937, the Radical-Socialist Camille Chautemps became Premier of a new Popular Front government with Blum as Deputy Premier. The Communists pledged their support to him "in the measure in which he will assure the defense of social gains."⁷⁵

V. CHAUTEMPES AND THE COMMUNISTS

Chautemps had already headed two governments for short periods before coming to power in June, 1937. He was destined to head two more before March, 1938. Both governments in this latter period were plagued by domestic problems, mainly financial, and France's position in world affairs continued to decline. The Spanish question continued as a lively issue but Chautemps stood firm on the policy of non-intervention, although his motive seems to have been different from that of Blum. He told Ambassador Bullitt on October 22, 1937, that no French army would be sent to Spain nor would France open her frontier to supplies for Spain because the result would be the "condemnation of the French throughout the world for cooperation with Bolsheviki and the utter

⁷⁴Fraser and Natanson, op. cit., p. 272.

⁷⁵Cited in Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 212-213.

defeat of the side which the French were supporting.⁷⁶

General weakness in foreign policy was indicated by heavy reliance upon Great Britain. Reportedly, maintaining intact the British guarantee of France's frontiers was the "cardinal point" of French foreign policy.⁷⁷ Foreign Minister Yvon Delbos, held over from the Blum cabinet, made a long tour of Eastern European capitals, with the notable exception of Moscow, in December, 1937. The results were very disappointing due to the considerable deterioration of the position of France since the remilitarization of the Rhineland.

In January, 1937, a series of mass arrests and trials known as the "purges" began in the Soviet Union. The execution of many Old Guard Communists and over five thousand officers and officials was viewed with shock throughout the world and with consternation in the British and French General Staffs. To some extent, the French Communist Party was embarrassed and weakened by the trials, but not seriously.⁷⁸ The French intellectual extreme Left was certainly not materially disillusioned.⁷⁹ There was, however, a

⁷⁶United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States 1937 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), Vol. I, p. 149.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 137.

⁷⁸Norton Webb, "New Deal: French Style," Current History, XLVI (June 1937), p. 56. See also Foreign Relations of the United States 1937, Vol. I, p. 56, and Andre Maurois, "Paradox of French Communism," Current History, XLIX (November 1938), p. 27.

⁷⁹Caute, op. cit., p. 127.

perceptible attempt by the French Communist Party to disassociate itself from the goings-on in the Soviet Union. In a speech delivered on December 26, 1937, Maurice Thorez took care to assert the independence of France and, by implication, of the French Communist Party:

France must take its cue neither from Rome, nor Berlin, nor London, nor Moscow, for which we do not conceal our feelings of admiration and affection. It must be from Paris, our capital.⁸⁰

Thorez went on to list those instances when France had "betrayed her Mission": the signing of the Four Power Pact of 1933-1934, the toleration of Mussolini's conquest of Abyssinia, the rupture of Locarno with the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the blockade of republican Spain. "In order to accomplish her mission in the world," Thorez said:

France must pursue a democratic foreign policy which reflects on an international scale the changes brought about in our country as a result of the People's Front victory.⁸¹

This "democratic foreign policy" would consist of the following:

1. France must return to reliance on the League of Nations for security and for dealing with aggression.
2. A new basis of Franco-British relations had to be established.

⁸⁰ Maurice Thorez, France of the People's Front and Its Mission in the World (New York: Workers Library, 1938), p. 73.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 68, 77-78.

3. There must be increased Franco-American collaboration, especially in the Far East.
4. The defenders of collective security in Central Europe must be encouraged.
5. Democracy and liberties must be restored in Austria.
6. France must prove her attachment to the Franco-Soviet Pact.
7. French diplomatic personnel must be "democratized" so as to halt their practice of telling people abroad that the People's Front is "an accident, a transitory phenomenon" as the "real" Foreign Minister, Alexis Leger, would have them believe.⁸²

In 1938, Thorez published a book⁸³ which was part autobiography and part Communist Party platform. Some of the items contained in the book are worthy of consideration in the study of the Party's foreign policy. For instance, Thores warned that Germany was trying to win England over to her side by such tactics as the Anglo-German Naval Accord just as the Anglo-Italian agreement on the status of the Mediterranean had aided the Fascists in destroying the Spanish Republic.⁸⁴ The Communist Party, wrote Thorez, stood for non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, but on the other hand, France could not neglect Fascist interference. Contractual agreements must be observed; the League Covenant must be respected; pacts of

⁸²Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁸³Maurice Thorez, Son of the People, trans. Douglas Graman (New York: International Publishers, 1938).

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 159.

mutual assistance, following the principle of the Franco-Soviet Pact, must be concluded by peace-loving states.⁸⁵ The League of Nations must again open the questions of the Italo-German aggression against Spain and the Japanese invasion of China. France must proclaim publicly at Geneva her proposals for enforcing international law in the Far East and in Western Europe.⁸⁶

As 1937 drew to a close, the Party held its Ninth Congress at Arles, December 25-29. It proved to be the summit of the Party's history to date.⁸⁷ Membership was up to an all-time high of 340,000 of whom over 115,000 were in the Paris region alone. The Cantonal elections of October had confirmed the success of the Popular Front.⁸⁸ The Communists might have been enjoying their success, but in the meantime, Chautemps was having increasing difficulties with the Socialists as well as the Communists. The situation was about to come to a head.

In January, 1938, the Communist Deputy Ramette announced on the floor of the Chamber that although the Communists were against the pending measure on exchange control, they would not vote against the measure in order to preserve the Popular Front. They would abstain. Chautemps, annoyed at the Communists because of a new wave of strikes in December, shouted back that the Communists could have their

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 214-215.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 220.

⁸⁷Fauvet, op. cit., p. 216.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 214-215.

liberty and not be a part of the government majority at all. This direct slap at the Popular Front was too much for the Socialists, who resigned from the government, bringing down Chautemps.⁸⁹

It took four days before Chautemps was called to form a new government. In the meantime, Leon Blum attempted to sponsor a National Government, built around the Front Populaire but expanded to the Right, de Thorez à Reynaud. The Communists were willing to back this arrangement on condition that the Popular Front program still be applied.⁹⁰ This move led reporter Alexander Werth to conclude that the links between the French Communists and Moscow are flimsier than is generally believed. He based his statement on repeated remarks by Thorez that the Communist Party was willing and ready to cooperate with the democratic forces of the country to achieve the possible rather than hold out for what would be ideal.⁹¹

Blum's plan failed, however, because Reynaud's party, the Alliance Démocratique, vetoed the idea, and because many of the Radicals were against having French policy "dictated by Moscow."⁹² The Radicals, concerned with

⁸⁹Alexander Werth, 'N. Chautemps Cries "Wolf"', Current History, XLVIII (March 1938), p. 25, and Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 220-221.

⁹⁰Fauvet, op. cit., p. 221.

⁹¹Werth, Current History, XLVIII (March 1938), p. 157.

⁹²Fauvet, loc. cit.

respectability, were no longer Popular Front enthusiasts. And so, on January 16, 1938, Chautemps formed a new government without Socialist participation⁹³ and with greater orientation to the Right. The following month, Chautemps explained his reasons to the American Ambassador for rejecting a National Government as suggested by Blum. In any National Government, Chautemps would insist on the Communists being excluded because "they would report every conversation to Stalin." Besides, the British, he said, were opposed to Communists in the French Government. On the other hand, he agreed, a government of Radicals and the Right would be menaced constantly by strikes if it did not follow a policy approved in Moscow." To make it more difficult, Blum would refuse to join the government if the Communists were excluded.⁹⁴ Clearly, Chautemps and his colleagues believed that the French Communist Party had the country bogged down.

Chautemps' new government lasted only six and a half weeks. It was marked by an interesting disagreement between the Communists and the Socialists. It seems that the Socialists refused to give Chautemps the full powers which he requested. The Communists thought this action premature and castigated the Socialists for hindering a firm French foreign policy, for by this time, the Communists were vitally

⁹³Beloff, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 113.

⁹⁴United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States 1938 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), Vol. I, p. 24.

concerned with foreign affairs and were preoccupied with building up air and naval forces and with reinforcing the Franco-Soviet Pact.⁹⁵ Domestic concerns could take second place. In the atmosphere of the impending Austrian crisis, Chautemps resigned on March 10, 1938.

VI. ANSCHLUSSE AND BLUM AGAIN

Hitler's shocking annexation of Austria took place on March 12, 1938. As German troops marched into Vienna, France, which since 1918 had been the center of power on the Continent of Europe and the possessor of its most powerful army, was without a government for the second time that calendar year. In 1935 France could have acted when Germany announced rearmament. In 1936 France at least debated within the cabinet the course of action to take in response to the remilitarization of the Rhineland. But in 1938, France had no government in the time of crisis.⁹⁶ It was not the Communists who were to blame for the lack of French initiative but, more correctly, the enemies of the Communists who were so fearful of the bogey of the "Red Menace" and revolution within France that they rendered, or at least helped to render, the French body politic incapable of

⁹⁵Fauvet, op. cit., p. 222.

⁹⁶Maurice Thorez, later in the month, caused an audience to hiss and boo Chautemps "for resigning rather than face the Austrian crisis." See news item in the New York Times, March 20, 1938.

stability, consistency and concerted action. There was not even a debate in the Chambers on this new crisis.⁹⁷ Delbos reportedly proposed a tough demarche against Germany by Britain and France, but only as a sop to the Popular Front, that is, for domestic consumption only.⁹⁸

While the Deputies searched for a new government, Gabriel Peri editorialized in L'Humanité:

Europe risks paying with her blood for the tragic error of those who have not listened to our warning. . . . The last hope can and should be saved. May France give herself without delay a government determined to practice a democratic and French foreign policy.⁹⁹

With the fall of Chautemps, Blum again brought forth the idea of a Rassemblement National, this time encompassing more of the Right, de Thorez à Marin. Only the outspoken Fascists were to be excluded. On the very day of Anschluss, Blum addressed representatives of all parties of the Right in defense of forming a government to include the Communists:

Let me say this: in case of war you are going to mobilize the Communists as anybody else. The Communists, after all, represent 1,500,000 workers, peasants and small tradesmen. You have no right to throw them out.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Werth wrote in the fall of 1938 that "in the last eighteen months, there has been only one proper foreign debate at the Chamber--on February 25 and 26, 1938, after the fall of Mr. Eder." See Alexander Werth, "After the Popular Front," Foreign Affairs, XVII (October 1938), p. 20.

⁹⁸Foreign Relations of the United States 1938, Vol. I, p. 25.

⁹⁹Cited in Fauvet, op. cit., p. 223.

¹⁰⁰Cited in Werth, Twilight of France, p. 155.

He went on to remind them that the Communists and the C.G.T. would be needed to speed up armament production. Blum stressed his independent course of action during the Spanish question despite Communist pressure and promised the Right his continued independence from foreign veto.¹ Paul Reynaud agreed, "It is not Stalin who enters Vienna today and who will menace Prague tomorrow. It is Hitler!"²

But Marin, the leader of the party at the right end of the proposed National Government, was opposed. So too was Flandin, a former Premier and Foreign Minister, who felt that the entry of the Communists into any French government, however, National, would "deeply shock Mr. Chamberlain and cause a break with England." Furthermore, he believed Germany and Italy would be openly hostile.³ In short, the Right, with the exception of Reynaud and the Christian Democrats who disapproved of Hitler's treatment of Catholics, was unimpressed with the gravity of the international situation to accept Blum's appeal for a National Government. Domestic affairs had to come first. Albert Guérard, an historian critical of the French Right, later wrote:

The Conservatives, who had long claimed a monopoly of patriotism, were thinking of their social and economic privileges, not the national interest. . . . They saw everywhere in Europe a contest between

¹Ibid., pp. 158-159.

²Fauvet, op. cit., p. 223, citing Paul Reynaud, Memoires, Tome 2.

³Werth, Twilight of France, pp. 158-159.

communism and fascism, and they unhesitatingly preferred fascism: most literally, 'Rather Hitler than Blum!'"⁴

On March 13, 1938, Blum succeeded in forming a government of Socialists and Radicals, the last Popular Front government. It was destined to last less than a month.

On March 14, Blum solemnly pledged to the Czech Minister in Paris that France would honor her commitments to Czechoslovakia in case of further German expansion. Three days later, he outlined before the Chamber of Deputies his plans for accelerated rearmament. "We ought, therefore, before all else, to prepare for the perils of the situation abroad."⁵ The Communist Party agreed. In the same Chamber a week later, Florimond Bonte spoke in the name of the Party:

[The Communist Party] will vote for [war preparations] because it does not want the country to know, in the event of aggression, the immense dangers of improvisation and to be placed in the impossibility of organizing and preparing all the national resources effectively, properly and rapidly.

It will vote for this measure because it wants to put the French people in a state to resist victoriously, from the very first day, the aggression which will try to impair the national independence and integrity, and [to prevent] devastations and death across the rich provinces of our country.⁶

The Soviet Union, likewise reacting to the Anschluss, proposed on March 16 that a conference of Britain, France,

⁴Guérard, op. cit., p. 420.

⁵Journal Officiel, Debats Parlementaires, Chambre des Députés, Session Ordinaire de 1938, 17 Mars, p. 536.

⁶Ibid., 24 Mars, p. 956.

the United States and the U.S.S.R. be called to discuss possible implementation of the Franco-Soviet Pact within the League framework in the event of further threats to the peace by Germany.⁷ The proposal died.

Blum's Foreign Minister was J. Paul-Boncour, a long-time enthusiast for the League of Nations. Under his short stewardship, France's foreign policy assumed a novel forcefulness and direction. He reiterated Blum's guarantee to Czechoslovakia and sounded out France's Eastern allies, including the Soviet Union, on their views regarding future German aggression, especially in the light of French alliances with Poland, the Little Entente and the Soviet Union. And to the delight of the Communists, he relaxed the embargo on munitions to Spain. London was "furious" at this turn of events.⁸ Britain had no desire to commit herself to guarantees in Eastern Europe. The French Right, too, objected to this energetic foreign policy and their criticism heavily contributed to the fall of Blum's new government.⁹

At home, Blum's second cabinet was hit with another wave of strikes, the most serious since 1936. For over two weeks, not one aircraft was produced to help rebuild the French Air Force. The workers were again taking advantage

⁷Churchill, op. cit., p. 274.

⁸Paul A. Gagnon, France Since 1789 (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 410.

⁹Ford and Schorske, op. cit., p. 564.

of the Socialist Premier as they had in 1936 because they believed him to be the least likely Premier to deal harshly with the strikers. On the other hand, the French managerial class were unhelpful and uncompromising too. They had not accepted labor-management bargaining as a two-way street. They had not recognized the right of labor to have a legitimate voice in the economy, nor, as a rule, did they consider the gravity of the international situation severe enough to sooth their piques feelings over the Matignon Agreements or the labor policies of the Popular Front. Reportedly, many employers, even in the most important branches of industry, chose to observe strictly the forty-hour week rather than accept additional orders which would involve payment of overtime and the hiring of additional workers.¹⁰

When the Senate again rejected Blum's request for financial powers, Blum's second cabinet fell on April 8, 1938. The Popular Front governments had come to an end. In the freewheeling democratic society that was France, with finite limitations on her power and resources, it proved simply impossible to execute vigorous social reforms (which cost money) and at the same time initiate an intensive rearmament. France simply could not have guns and butter. Coupled to the financial problem was that of foreign policy.

¹⁰Heinz Pol, Suicide of a Democracy, trans. Heinz and Ruth Norden (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), p. 267.

Wide differences of opinion on foreign policy, especially regarding the Spanish Civil War, greatly widened the breach between Left and Right which in turn gave domestic politics a quality of ideological fanaticism and contributed to the undermining of democratic foundations of government and the moral disarmament of France.¹¹

In the entire era of the Popular Front, the Communists could not claim one significant foreign policy victory. Never did they prevail upon France to take a course of action which was favored by them or the Soviet Union. Rather, their presence helped the working classes embark on a series of strikes which blackened the Communists' reputation still more and convinced many that any dealings with the Russians was dangerous. The blood bath in Spain was seen as a preview to what would happen in France if the Communists, indeed the Popular Front, became too powerful. The only influence which the Communist Party could exert in that atmosphere was detrimental to the Soviet Union if she was pursuing a policy which looked toward collective security as the answer to the threat from Hitler. After nearly two years of the Popular Front, the Franco-Soviet Pact of 1935 remained ineffective. In France, few but the Communists would touch it because of the howl of criticism it would stir up.

¹¹Robert W. Seton-Watson, From Lenin to Malenkov: The History of World Communism (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), p. 182.

France was indeed weaker internally at the conclusion of the Popular Front years. Part of this was due to the world economic ills which had reached France rather late but were still equally present in most parts of the industrial world. As for France's inner dissention and polarization of its political spectrum, the Communist Party was only partially to blame. The cause of the polarization was a force not injected by any political party. The Communists and the Socialists were simply present in the environment and pulled on the end which their economic and social philosophies had taught them. The Communists were vociferous; they preached radical ideas. But the Right and those who disagreed with the Communists were equally vehement and, all too often, advocated radical solutions too. It was the peculiar nature of the Communists which frequently scared the French people and the French Government into doing things they might not ordinarily have done.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOVIET-NAZI FACT

Less than seventeen months after Blum's second government fell, France was at war with Germany. During this interval, neither the Socialists nor the Communists were part of the Daladier cabinet, although in many instances they voted with the government. The general tenor of relations with regard to Germany were at once mildly firm, then appeasing, then firm. Regarding the Soviet Union, the tenor ran from consideration, to insult, to mild interest, to disgust. Britain continued to lead as France hung to her apron strings. The French Communist Party was nothing more than a nuisance to the government because its prime activity was crying in the wilderness about a menace which neither France nor Britain cared to believe in until it was too late. Any Frenchman today would agree that the influence of the French Communist Party in this period was regrettably nil, except of course, that the Party still frightened people away.

I. DALADIER AND MUNICH

On April 10, 1938, Edouard Daladier, the Radical "strong man," well educated and a patriot trusted by the General Staff, became Premier and George Bonnet his Foreign Minister. The Socialists did not participate in the

government which, like the Chautemps government of 1938, was oriented more to the Right than previous Popular Front governments.¹ On April 12, Daladier was granted full financial powers, effective until July 31. The Communists voted in favor of this measure.² These emergency powers were only the first of several to be given the Daladier government before the outbreak of the war. Indeed, in June 1938, Daladier sent the Parliament on a holiday to last until the fall so as to avoid any unpleasantness with the Communists on the still unresolved Spanish problem and with both the Socialists and the Communists on the problem of old age pensions.³

No longer part of the government majority, the French Communist Party continued its fight for stemming the expansion of Nazi Germany. The Rhineland had been reoccupied and Austria annexed. Hitler had announced that he had no further territorial desires in the West. After Austria, Sudeten Czechoslovakia, Memel, Danzig and the Polish Corridor seemed to be next. Increasing pressure by Germany on Czechoslovakia caused new alarm in Moscow. This alarm was reflected in the publications of the French Communist Party.

¹Max Beloff, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1929-1941 (London: Oxford University Press, 1947-1949), Vol. II, p. 126.

²Jacques Favet, Histoire du Parti Communiste Français (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1964), Vol. I, p. 226.

³Alexander Werth, After the Popular Front, Foreign Affairs, XVII (October 1938), p. 26.

To abandon Czechoslovakia is to compromise the peace, to strike a direct blow at the security of our country, France, to open for Hitler the way to the Danube, that is, the route to southeast Europe. Is that the desire of those of our patriots who counselling us to tear up the pacts which tie France to Czechoslovakia?⁴

In May, 1938, when the Czechs erroneously suspected German action in connection with their municipal elections and called for partial mobilization, the French Communists proposed that a motion of sympathy be addressed to the Government of Czechoslovakia in the name of all the parties of the Popular Front. The Socialists and Radicals refused.⁵

The French alliance with Czechoslovakia still existed. But on this alliance hinged the operation of the Soviet-Czech Alliance. In a conversation on May 12, 1938, with Litvinov, Bonnet asked what the Soviet attitude would be in the event of a conflict between Germany and Czechoslovakia. Litvinov replied that if France fulfilled her obligation, the U.S.S.R. would do likewise. When questioned on how the Soviet Government would or could aid Czechoslovakia if Poland and Rumania objected to the passage of Soviet forces, Litvinov acknowledged the problem and said it was up to France, which had treaty obligations with Poland and Rumania, to secure their consent. Bonnet was of the opinion that Rumania would oblige, but in later talks he found her,

⁴Jean Bruhat, "La Tchécoslovaquie et l'équilibre européen," Cahiers du Bolchevisme, May-June 1938, p. 151.

⁵Fauvet, op. cit., p. 232.

as well as Poland, obdurately opposed.⁶

Later the same month, Bonnet reflected the fears of the Daladier government in making military arrangements with the Soviets. Any prospect of Soviet military support, he told his Ambassador to Moscow, might "incite certain French elements to appear bellicose."⁷ Nevertheless, on June 12, 1938, Daladier renewed Blum's pledge of March 14, declaring that France's obligations to Czechoslovakia were "sacred, and cannot be evaded."⁸ Two days earlier, Maurice Thorez, who had already referred to Czechoslovakia as the last pillar of democracy in Central Europe, proposed to organize the "World Peace against the Fascist threat. It would consist of 'the great democratic nations: England, Czechoslovakia, Spain [sic], the Soviet Union and also the United States, Mexico and China.'⁹

The British Government, upon whom the French Government so much relied, was of the opinion that the military situation was such that neither France nor Great Britain would be able to prevent Germany from overwhelming Czechoslovakia even if Russian help was secured. The purges of

⁶Beloff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 131.

⁷Franklin L. Ford and Carl E. Schorske, "The Voice in the Wilderness: Houbert Coulondre," The Diplomats, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 556.

⁸Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Vol. I of The Second World War, 6 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948-1953), p. 290.

⁹Cited in Fauvet, op. cit., p. 566.

1936-1937 were judged to have vastly reduced the fighting capability of the Red Army. Furthermore, there was the problem of geography. The U.S.S.R. had no common border with Czechoslovakia. Poland was completely opposed to the passage of Russian troops while Rumania condescended to tolerate the passage of Russian aircraft only.¹⁰ The French Government was placed in the dilemma of taking the initiative of action or following the wake of British decisions. Within the government and among the people, opinions were diametrically opposed. The French Ambassador to Moscow, Robert Coulondre, constantly urged his government to a closer agreement with the Soviet Union. Interestingly enough, it was the Czech Ambassador in Moscow who told Coulondre that the his government had been informed in Paris that the French Government would not follow up Franco-Soviet military conversations at that time because such conversations might offend the susceptibilities of the English Conservatives.¹¹ So in the end, Britain led the way and France followed. Both governments notified the Czechs that unless they yielded to the demands of the Sudeten Germans, the Czech Government would be left to face Germany unassisted. France, in effect, was denouncing her alliance with Czechoslovakia.

¹⁰René Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 323.

¹¹Ford and Schorske, op. cit., p. 567, citing Robert Coulondre, De Staline à Hitler: Souvenirs de deux ambassades, 1936-1939 (Paris, 1950), p. 153.

Within France, the brewing Czech crisis was splitting France into 'two fanatical Frances,' each side becoming more and more extreme.¹² There was the 'peace party' faction and the 'war party' faction; those who favored peace at any price and those who favored a policy of firmness and resistance. Anti-Soviet prejudices and a complacent belief in the strength of the peace front gave aid and comfort to the appeasers. They were openly opposed to what was perhaps the only measure to save France: a military agreement with the U.S.S.R. In a sense, then, the French Right, as Micaud says, had to 'accept the possibility of war while opposing the best conditions for victory.'¹³

Those in France who stood for resistance and firmness were called belliciste, and L'Humanité had the reputation of being the great belliciste newspaper in September, 1938.¹⁴ Its editorials on foreign affairs, written by Communist Deputy Gabriel Péri, were habitually well reasoned and unusually well documented.¹⁵ On September 20, following

¹²Edmond Taylor, The Strategy of Terror: Europe's Inner Front (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1940), p. 35.

¹³Charles A. Micaud, The French Right and Nazi Germany 1933-1939 (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1964), p. 221.

¹⁴Alexander Werth, The Twilight of France 1933-1940, ed. with an Introduction by D. W. Brogan (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), p. 200.

¹⁵Ibid. Péri was shot as a hostage by the Germans in the end of 1941.

the Berchtesgaden meeting between Hitler and Chamberlain and the subsequent Anglo-French discussions in London, L'Humanité sneered:

Obedying the injunctions of Hitler, M. Chamberlain has just decided, for the English and French ministers, upon the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia whose integrity is inseparable from the security of France and the peace of Europe.¹⁶

On September 19 or 20, Benes is said to have questioned the Soviet Minister to Prague on whether the Soviet Union would honor the Soviet-Czech pact. The answer was affirmative. A second question sought Russia's advice in the event France dishonored her pact. The Soviet reply was that Czechoslovakia should appeal to the League and that upon Germany's being branded as an aggressor, the U.S.S.R. would come at once to the assistance of the Czechs whatever the other powers might do.¹⁷

Before this reply reached the Czech cabinet, the Czechs decided on the night of September 20-21, 1938, to accept the Anglo-French proposals and entrust the fate of their nation to Great Britain and France.¹⁸ When Chamberlain saw Hitler on September 23 at Godesberg, Hitler upped his demands and Chamberlain returned home, the crisis still unresolved. In Paris, Gabriel Péri pleaded in L'Humanité

¹⁶Editorial in L'Humanité, September 20, 1938.

¹⁷Beloff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 151.

¹⁸George Vernadsky, A History of Russia (5th ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 391.

for Britain and France to hold fast to the line of resistance.¹⁹ In Geneva, Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov, addressing the League of Nations Assembly on September 23, heaped shame on the Western powers. The French and the Czechs, he stated, had preferred two bilateral pacts: the Franco-Soviet Pact and the Soviet-Czech Pact, rather than a multi-lateral pact of the three. He noted the provisions of the Soviet-Czech Pact which permitted Soviet aid to Czechoslovakia only if France first rendered assistance. He went on:

Thus the Soviet Government had no obligations to Czechoslovakia in the event of French indifference to an attack on her. In that event, the Soviet Government might come to the aid of Czechoslovakia only in virtue of a decision by the League of Nations.²⁰

On September 25, L'Humanité demanded the resignations of Daladier and Bonnet "who lost their heads on 12 September and hated France after 21 September." The Communist press called Hitler's new demands an "ultimatum" and

¹⁹ Cited by David Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals 1914-1966 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 122.

²⁰ Jane Degras (ed.), Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy (Oxford University Press, 1953), Vol. III, pp. 304-305, citing League of Nations (Official Journal, Supplement 189, p. 24. George F. Kennan, Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1962), p. 305, believes that Moscow's pre-Munich expressions of devotion to Czechoslovakia actually "cost Moscow very little" and should not be construed as an overly heroic act on her part. On the other hand, this study notes the agreement between the official statements of Moscow and the utterances of the French Communist Party.

begged the French and British leaders to listen to another advocate of resistance, Winston Churchill.²¹

After the apparent impasse of September 23, Mussolini seized upon a proposal of Chamberlain and suggested that a meeting be held in Munich with representatives from Britain, France, Germany and Italy to settle the Czech problem. Soviet Russia, who had a Pact of Mutual Assistance with Czechoslovakia, was not only not invited, but was not even informed beforehand of the impending conference.²² On the night of September 29-30, 1938, Chamberlain, Daladier and Mussolini handed over to Hitler the Sudeten Province of Czechoslovakia. The Four Power Pact, although never ratified, had in fact become the directorate of Europe. Chamberlain returned home to Britain with an Anglo-German declaration of good will and words about 'peace in our time.' Daladier, who was not the appeaser that was Chamberlain, feared the wrath of France when he returned to Paris. Instead, he was greeted with wild rejoicing and enthusiasm. The policy of appeasements had considerable support in both Britain and France.

II. THE COMMUNISTS AFTER MUNICH

Following the Munich crisis, the French Communist Party stood apart for its opposition to the acte de brigandage

²¹Fauvet, op. cit., p. 234.

²²Vernadsky, loc. cit.

accomplished at Munich. On October 1, Thorez, Cachin and Duclos sent a message of sympathy to the Czech people and the Czech Communist Party regretting their humiliation before Hitler.²³ Criticism by the Party greatly embarrassed the French Government, perhaps seriously impinging upon its conscience. Foreign Minister Bonnet confessed to United States Ambassador Bullitt on October 3 that he and Daladier hoped that new elections could be held soon so that the troublesome Communists could be eliminated completely from the government majority. Bonnet meant that it was "impossible to produce a revival in France so long as every life was dependent on Communist votes."²⁴

In the Chamber of Deputies on October 4, Gabriel Péri had this to say about the Munich agreement:

Messieurs, our last discussion on foreign policy was after the annexation of Austria. Since that event, the map of Europe has been revised under the menace and we dispose today, in a quarter of an hour, to express our opinion on this subject. We hope not to have to sanction, in a little while, by standing or sitting [to indicate our vote], the approval of a new dictat or a new coup de force.²⁵

Péri went on to warn the members of the Chamber of the dangers inherent in the Munich settlement. He stressed that

²³Fauvet, op. cit., p. 236.

²⁴United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States 1938 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), Vol. I, p. 84.

²⁵Journal Officiel, Debats Parlementaires, Chambre des Députés, Session Extraordinaire de 1938, 4 Octobre, p. 1531.

Hitler's domination of Czechoslovakia was a step in the direction of the Rumanian oil fields. The entire Little Entente and the Balkans, he said, were threatened.²⁶

Later that same day, the Chamber of Deputies backed the government in a vote of confidence over the Munich agreement by the vote of 535 to 75, with 3 abstentions. Opposed were the Communists, one Socialist and that conservative nationalist, Henri de Kerillis.²⁷

But the Socialists were moving further away from the Communists. In that same year, at the Socialist Party convention at Nantes, Paul Faure defeated Leon Blum and the Party adopted Faure's motion advocating a pacifist course abroad and condemning collaboration with the Communists at home. The vote was 5,700 to 1,700, an indication of the prevailing mood in France. France thus became, rather interestingly, the only democracy at that time with an appreciable pro-Munich Left.²⁸ On October 13, the bureau of the more moderate Radical-Socialists passed a declaration against the domestic and foreign policy of the Communists.²⁹ The Popular Front was now indeed history. Only the Communists, the Left wing of the Socialist Party, the C.G.T. and

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Micaud, op. cit., p. 176.

²⁸Gallicus, "France Under Daladier," New Republic, 10 (July 26, 1939), p. 327.

²⁹Micaud, op. cit., p. 179.

a minority of Radical-Socialists and traditional Nationalists could be called anti-Munichois.³⁰ By its unyielding attitude, the Communist Party lost a great number of the members gained between 1934 and 1938.³¹

In Moscow, the Munich agreement was viewed as a prelude either to a European coalition against the Soviet Union or to the granting to Germany of a carte blanche in the East.³² Le Journal de Moscow stated on October 4:

In effect France has with its own hands and without having consulted the USSR annulled the Soviet-Czech pact and one of the important elements of a regional pact. . . . The loss of its allies and isolation--this is the price which France will have to pay for capitulation before the aggressor.³³

This statement was interpreted by many as the Soviet method of announcing the end of the Franco-Soviet Pact. Paris, however, was not informed that this was, in fact, the official Russian attitude.³⁴

Daladier, having been accorded full powers on October 5, seemed to be firmly convinced that the Right was now definitely more patriotic than the Left. He swerved

³⁰Ibid., p. 180.

³¹ Mario Einaudi, Jean-Marie Domenach and Aldo Garosci, Communism in Western Europe (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1951), p. 73.

³²Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 526.

³³Cited in Frederick L. Schuman, "Fear, Fascism and Appeasement," Readings in Soviet Foreign Policy, ed. Arthur E. Adams (Boston: E. C. Heath and Company, 1961), p. 114.

³⁴News item in Current History, XLIV (November 1956), p. 56.

increasingly to the Right.³⁵ On October 21 he published emergency regulations which abolished the forty-hour week. On October 23 he sharply attacked the Communists.

Toward the end of November, 1938, France was hit by a general strike in protest against the decree-laws of Daladier, the revaluation of gold and the increased working hours. Daladier put the blame on the Communists, who no doubt supported the strike but were not necessarily the sole authors of it. Leon Jauhaux, secretary of the C.G.T. and no Communist, was said to be the man most responsible.³⁶ Daladier held firm and the general strike of November 30 collapsed in failure. This was yet another blow to the influence and prestige of the Communist Party.

Writing about this time for Natie, Genevieve Tabouis saw some possible hope for the security of Europe through the Franco-Soviet Pact. But, she wrote:

The new and militant attitude of the working masses embarrassed the more conservative supporters of the alliance. The presence of the red flag and the resounding strains of the "Internationale" at official gatherings made the financiers, the big industrialists, and the aristocrats think that France was moving toward communism and that the Franco-Soviet pact was the instrument which would bring about social revolution. They did all they could to discredit the alliance, and the disfavor with which the English always viewed it; they made it impossible

³⁵Albert Guérard, France: A Modern History (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 420.

³⁶Robert Dell, "New Directions in France," Current History, XLIX (January 1939), p. 17.

for the government to strengthen the pact by military or other conversations.³⁷

The article went on to mention the fear of the conservatives of being 'sold to the Soviets.' It points out that the pressure of big financiers had caused even the Popular Front leaders to allow the Pact to sink into the lethargy in which seemingly it languishes.³⁸

But instead of moving closer to the Russians, France seemed to move closer to Germany. In December, 1938, Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister came to Paris and together with George Bonnet on December 6 signed a Declaration of Friendly Relations which amounted to nothing more than a general statement of good intentions and good neighborliness between France and Germany.³⁹ Historian Guérard calls it 'a pathetic piece of make-believe which deceived no one.'⁴⁰ Years later, Maurice Thorez called it 'the free hand for Germany in the East.'⁴¹ It is doubtful that this later accusation is true, but a portion of the French press did campaign shortly after the signing of the document for the formation of a Greater Ukraine state under German

³⁷Genevieve Takouis, 'That Franco-Soviet Pact,' Nation, CXLVIII (January 28, 1939), p. 115.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 115-116.

³⁹For the text of this Declaration, see Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War (New York: International Publishers, 1948), Vol. I, pp. 284-285.

⁴⁰Guérard, op. cit., p. 420.

⁴¹Maurice Thorez, Pour L'Union (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1949), p. 38.

influence.⁴²

The French Communist Party was again frustrated in January, 1939, when Britain and France decided to recognize the government of General Franco. In the Chambers on January 28, 1939, Daladier's foreign policy won approval while 156 Socialists, 72 Communists and M. de Kerillis disapproved.

On March 15, 1939, Hitler established the German protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia. German troops, followed by Hitler himself, had entered Prague, the former capital of Czechoslovakia.

This time, the reaction of the West to this move of Hitler was different. Chamberlain was shocked and appalled that Hitler was "no gentleman" and had gone back on his word. Although he had been an appeaser, Chamberlain did not like being "cheated," as Mr. Churchill put it.⁴³ In Paris, the French Communist Party, feeling that its opposition to Munich had been vindicated, published an open declaration criticizing the Daladier government:

The Munichois government ought to forfeit its place to a true government of France, capable of being respected, capable of defending its interests and honor. The French Communist Party calls upon all to unite to guarantee the security of the country and to save peace.

Without distinction of political opinion or of religious faith, Communist, Socialist, Democrats, Republicans, Catholics, Jews and Protestants ought

⁴²Alexander Werth, Russia At War 1941-1945 (New York: Avon Books, 1964), p. 31.

⁴³Churchill, op. cit., p. 344.

to rally together elbow to elbow.

Let us unite to help France save the peace.⁴⁴

Daladier sought plenary powers to cope with the new situation. The Communists vigorously opposed this, but Daladier got his powers by a vote of 321 to 264.⁴⁵

In March, the Soviet Government made another attempt at collective security with the West. Litvinov proposed a six-power conference of the nations most directly involved to consider this new Hitlerite aggression. The British Government, however, rejected this and proposed instead the publication of a joint Anglo-Franco-Soviet-Polish declaration announcing the intention of the four to act jointly in case of danger to any European state.⁴⁶ On March 23 the Germans occupied Memel.

The French Communists reacted by strongly favoring joint action, especially between France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. L'Humanité headlined: United, France, USSR and Great Britain Ought to Inspire Confidence in All Menaced Peoples.⁴⁷ But the democracies were not about to listen to the Communists, either in France or the U.S.S.R. Diplomatic intercourse continued between the three powers, but on the part of Britain and France there was no urgency.

⁴⁴Front page declaration in L'Humanité, March 17, 1939.

⁴⁵News item in L'Humanité, March 19, 1939.

⁴⁶Werth, Russia At War, p. 43.

⁴⁷L'Humanité, March 26, 1939.

It seems that at this point, Stalin took another look at Litvinov's policy of collective security and found it lacking. For reasons known best to Stalin himself, he decided to explore other means of coping with the German menace. To implement this new policy he brought Viacheslav Molotov to the Soviet Foreign Office.

III. MOLOTOV AND HIS PACT

It was on May 4, 1939, that Litvinov resigned as Commissar of Foreign Affairs and cleared the way for Molotov to assume the post. Molotov had been Premier (Chairman of People's Commissars) and a member of the Politburo. One of his first acts was to renew the offer of a triple alliance against Hitler to the British and French Ambassadors in Moscow. The French at this time were interested, but the British still were not. Finally, however, Chamberlain agreed, under pressure from the Left and the Labor Party, to send a special envoy to Moscow. He was a Mr. William Strang, a foreign policy advisor of Chamberlain. His arrival marked the beginning of prolonged negotiations on the issues of direct and indirect aggression in Poland and the Baltic states.⁴⁸

In Paris, L'Humanité continued its campaign for the conclusion of an agreement with the Soviet Union. Bold type urged the French readers on July 2:

⁴⁸Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 392.

Quickly! The Accord with the U.S.S.R. to save the peace. In Danzig, there is an influx of arms and Nazi troops. But in Paris and in London, the Munichois are becoming the accomplices of the fascist aggressor, slowly preparing for new capitulations.⁴⁹

On the following day: "Not a Second Munich But A Pact with the USSR."⁵⁰ On July 5 the paper cried, "Poland is in a state of legitimate defense."⁵¹ And on the following day, Gabriel Péri wrote, "The militarization of Danzig is the beginning of aggression."⁵²

While negotiations in Moscow still dragged on, Britain and France accepted the suggestion on July 25 to send their military and naval representatives to Moscow for talks. The French Communists were in complete agreement. "Quickly, the Pact!" read Gabriel Péri's column on August 1.⁵³ Two days later, his banner read, "A Nazi Plan for the Encirclement of Poland."⁵⁴

The Anglo-French military mission, no member of which could be considered a top representative, finally arrived in Moscow on August 11. They possessed no written formal powers to conclude a military convention, much to the dismay of War Commissar Voroshilov. He was likewise struck

⁴⁹L'Humanité, July 2, 1939.

⁵⁰L'Humanité, July 3, 1939.

⁵¹L'Humanité, July 5, 1939.

⁵²Editorial in L'Humanité, July 6, 1939.

⁵³Editorial in L'Humanité, August 1, 1939.

⁵⁴Editorial in L'Humanité, August 3, 1939.

at the smallness of the planned British commitment on the Continent to aid France.⁵⁵ The talks soon ran into difficulties over the issue of Russian troops entering Poland and the Baltic states in the event of a German attack upon them. The British feared that this would open the way for the Red Army to walk into Europe. Furthermore, both Poland and the Baltic states refused to permit Soviet troops on their soil.

In the meantime, the Soviet Government had been making gestures to Berlin on the subject of possible trade agreements with Germany. By July, it appears that Hitler had made up his mind to attack Poland, and in the same month the German and Soviet representatives began talks on a new trade agreement. According to George Kennan, it was at this point that the Germans, in private talks, began to pressure the Russians for an agreement which would give the U.S.S.R. immunity from involvement in any impending war in Eastern Europe.⁵⁶ On August 21, 1939, a trade agreement was signed, while on the same evening it was announced that German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop was flying to Moscow to sign a Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union.

In France, the Communist Party was completely taken by surprise. According to Jacques Fauvet, the French Communists were both poorly informed and ill prepared for this

⁵⁵Beloff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 264.

⁵⁶George F. Kennan, Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1941 (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1960), p. 99.

turn of events.⁵⁷ The result was profound disagreement as to the reaction to be taken by the Party. On the day following the announcement of the impending pact, L'Humanité contained not one editorial comment by Maurice Thorez, Jacques Duclos or Gabriel Péri. Péri, it is said, stayed in his office for three days, completely overwhelmed by the news.⁵⁸

On September 23, L'Humanité finally made comment on the forthcoming pact with the Nazis. Headlines read:

Success for the Soviet Policy of Firmness. The Moscow Negotiations between the USSR and Germany Serve the Cause of Peace in Europe.

But then added, "Without further delay, Paris and London should sign now the Franco-Anglo-Soviet Pact."⁵⁹

On the following day, the Communist organ noted that negotiations between Ribbentrop and Molotov had opened but pointed out that there was no rupture in the conversations between the Soviet Union and the British and French military delegation.⁶⁰

Indeed the talks with Britain and France were continuing, although the military missions were still bogged down over the intransigence of Poland and Rumania. It was on August 21 that General Doumenc, the senior French

⁵⁷Fauvet, op. cit., p. 249.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹L'Humanité, August 23, 1939.

⁶⁰News item in L'Humanité, August 24, 1939.

military representative, had received a telegram from French Premier Daladier who had been exerting strong influence on the Polish Ambassador in Paris. The telegram, in effect, gave General Doumenc the authorization to go ahead and sign a military convention and to agree to the undertaking on Poland's behalf. The Polish Government had not authorized this and, in fact, three days later indicated that it did not and would not agree.⁶¹ The Soviet Government did not accept General Doumenc's commitment but rather insisted on a direct authorization from Poland and Rumania. This was not forthcoming and on the night of August 23, 1939, the Soviet Government signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany. It was published to the world the following day.

L'Humanité had written this for publication on August 25:

We are in favor of resistance to all acts of aggression and the Communists are ready to fulfill their duties as Frenchmen in the framework of the engagements contracted by their country. If Poland is attacked, the treaty with her must come into play.⁶²

But the French public did not read it because publication of L'Humanité was suspended by decree law on August 25 and the edition was seized. On the same day, Britain proclaimed a formal treaty with Poland while both French and British Governments made all preparations for war as Germany increased her pressure on Poland. The French Communists were

⁶¹Beloff, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 264-271.

⁶²Editorial in L'Humanité, August 25, 1939.

confused. After years of campaigning for resistance to Hitlerite Germany, the Soviet-Nazi Pact was not viewed as a change in the fundamental conflict with fascism. Party leader Maurice Thorez, in a communique issued on the same day as L'Humanité's suspension, stated that the people of France were united. Indeed, the Communists would be in the front rank in the struggle against Germany if Hitler were to unleash war. Furthermore, he said, the Communist Party approved the measures taken by the government to safeguard the frontiers and to bring aid, if necessary, to Poland, the ally of France. As for the Soviet-German Pact, it was simply a device of Stalin to fracture the aggressors (Germany, Italy and Japan), hitherto united under the Anti-Comintern Pact.⁶³

Shortly after the Soviet-Nazi Pact was signed, semi-official sources in Germany stated that the Franco-Soviet Pact was incompatible with the Soviet-Nazi Pact and therefore was no longer in force. On August 28 the French Ambassador in Moscow, M. Naggier, was informed by the Soviet Government that the Franco-Soviet Pact of 1935 had already been rendered null and void by the Franco-German "Non-Aggression Pact" of December 6, 1938.⁶⁴ So ended the Pact which might have

⁶³News item in the New York Times, August 26, 1939. See also Fauvet, op. cit., p. 252. This same tack was echoed by Marcel Cachin in an open letter to Leon Blum. See Beloff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 287.

⁶⁴Beloff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 271.

contained Hitler.

IV. WAR AND THE BANNING OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, thus setting off the spark which ignited World War II. The French Communist Party continued to maintain its nationalistic and patriotic outlook. On the same day that Hitler unleashed his war machine, the Party passed a resolution welcoming the Soviet-German Pact but also favoring aid to Poland.⁶⁵ On September 2, the Party's parliamentary group voted with the government for war credits, enthusiastically applauding Daladier's moving patriotic speech. On the following day, Britain, followed by France, declared war on Germany. Daladier was given additional plenary powers to implement the war effort.

In the days which followed the Communists answered faithfully their call to active duty with the military. Even Thorez reported on September 3 to his unit.⁶⁶ Marcel Cachin assured Leon Blum in an open letter:

We were the first to proclaim the necessity of making every sacrifice to strike down Hitlerian Nazism. We shall not cease to proclaim it. We receive our mots d'ordre only from the French people.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Beloff, loc. cit.

⁶⁶Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 255-256.

⁶⁷Cited in Beloff, loc. cit., and Maurice Ceyrat, La Politique Russe et le Parti Communiste Français 1920-1945 (Paris, 1946), p. 45.

For some reason, the French Communist Party was not aware that Moscow viewed the war between Germany, on the one hand, and France, Britain and Poland, on the other, as an "imperialist war." Later that same autumn, the Party was accused of not realizing the "communist significance" of the events of August, 1939. They were judged wrong for not recognizing an "imperialist" war, for voting military credits, for not protesting against the reactionary policies of Daladier, for speaking of collective security and mutual assistance.⁶⁸ From every indication, the French Communist Party was not fully aware of Moscow's change of attitude toward Germany until the middle of September, 1939.

On September 17, 1939, the Red Army invaded Poland from the east on the pretext of controlling chaos in Poland and preventing the persecution of the non-Polish minority in the eastern part of that beleaguered country. This time the Party seemed prepared. On the day following the invasion by the Russians, the Central Committee of the French Party acclaimed the liberation of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Then it took aim at France. The French state had gone to war, they charged, without the consent of Parliament and the Party therefore demanded the convening of the Chambers to examine the peace propositions of the Soviet Union.⁶⁹ Henceforth, the Communists denounced France and Britain as

⁶⁸Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 256-257.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 257.

"fomentors of the war" and openly endorsed the Russian invasion of eastern Poland. It was also at this time that several Communist leaders, including Thorez, deserted their units.⁷⁰ Within the period of a few weeks, the uncompromising belligerency of the Party turned to uncompromising pacifism. The Party which had been praising Poland for its resistant attitude, which had praised England and France for the guarantees to Poland, which had been insisting on an alliance with the Soviet Union to protect Poland, now referred to Poland as "that prison of the peoples," that "multi-national state," "that artificial creation of Versailles," and called the war of Britain and France against Germany "not a way of the people, but of high finance."⁷¹

⁷⁰Thorez later turned up in Moscow. After the war, he returned to France, was pardoned by de Gaulle who also gave him a post in the post-war cabinet. Thorez remained active in the leadership of the French Communist Party until his death on July 12, 1964.

⁷¹André Marty, The Trial of the French Communist Deputies (London: Laurence and Wisharr, Ltd., 1941), p. 19. It is not known for certain why the Party was not aware of Stalin's intentions to make a pact with the Germans but it is clear that while the French Communists were taken by surprise in August, they were prepared for the events of that September. Fauvet claims that the task of convincing the Party in September of the soundness of Moscow's actions was the work of the Comintern representative in France, a Czech known as "Clement." See Fauvet, op. cit., p. 257. Another author, Alfred Rieber, Stalin and the French Communist Party 1941-1947 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 4, says that the complete volte-face of the French Communist Party can be dated from September 20, the date of the return of the French Communist, Raymond Guyot, from Moscow with new instructions for the Party.

The complete shift of the Party was too much for some of its members and its friends. By the end of August, two Communist Deputies resigned from the Party, to be followed in September by another.⁷² The General Confederation of Labor condemned the Soviet-Nazi Pact and, after the events of September, broke off its relations with the Party. "Collaboration," said the labor organization, "is no longer possible with those who would not or could not condemn such an attitude which denies the principles of humane solidarity which are the honor of our labor movement."⁷³

The French Communist Party did not have long to proclaim its new stand, for on September 26, 1939, the Party was banned by decree-law. Within the week that followed the seventy-two Communist Deputies and two Senators were expelled from Parliament because of the Party's denunciation of the "imperialist" war.⁷⁴ The war, they claimed later in clandestinely published material, was the fault of men like Daladier and Bonnet. In an open proclamation, the Communist Party leveled its charges:

We accuse the Daladier-Bonnet gang of having sabotaged the Franco-Soviet Mutual Assistance Pact which was an essential guarantee of peace and security for our country. We accuse them of having systematically rejected and brought to naught the repeated

⁷²Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 254, 257.

⁷³Ibid., p. 257.

⁷⁴See "Flight From the Communists," Living Age, CCCLVIII (July 1940), p. 458, and Marty, op. cit.

proposals of the Soviet Union for the organization of collective security and peace, as our people desired.⁷⁵

The French Communist Party had lived through nearly nineteen years with the Third French Republic. For nearly the last four years of its life before its official bannishment, the Party had striven to strengthen the position of France and the Soviet Union against Germany and to enhance the position of the democracies against fascism. In its last year-and-a-half, it strove in vain to effect an alliance between the Soviet Union and the old Entente Cordiale. It failed. And after failing, it turned upon the French Government and the French people.

⁷⁵André Marty, Who Betrayed France (New York: Workers Library Publishers, Inc., 1940), pp. 20-21.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The French Communist Party in the latter Nineteen Thirties was indeed an influence on the foreign relations of the French Republic, but not directly and not in the positive sense. The presence and strength of the Party contributed significantly and inadvertently to the weakness of French leadership during this period.

The growing strength of the French Communist Party in the mid and late 1930's was not the result of efforts by Moscow but was rather the result of French backwardness in social legislation, and a dislike on the part of some Frenchmen for the fascism and national socialism of Mussolini and Hitler. The Communist Party had a firm policy for social reform and for maintaining peace. The French working class was in favor of both and many of them saw in the noisy Communists a group which might possibly accomplish those goals. Hence, the strong position of the Party during these years.

The position of the Communist Party on various foreign policy issues during these years would appear in hind-sight to be noble and commendable. They were in favor of an alliance between France and the Soviet Union. They were against the reintroduction of conscription in Germany. They were against Laval's policies of accommodation with Germany and Italy. They were opposed to Laval's tolerance of the fascist leagues. They condemned Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia. They gave their support to the Soviet Government for the ratification of the France-Soviet Pact. They complained of French inaction when Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland.

The elections of the Spring of 1936 gave the Communists seventy-two seats in the Chamber of Deputies but although the Communists were part of the victorious Popular Front coalition, they chose not to participate in the Government. The Civil War, which began in Spain only a few months after the Popular Front took the reins of power in France, was the first crushing defeat, by implication, for the Communists. Gradually at first, but increasingly as the months passed, the Communists sought to strike down the fascist-supported forces of General France. They were completely unsuccessful.

Hitler's annexation of Austria brought another call for action from the Communists but France did nothing.

As the Hitlerian threat moved east toward Czechoslovakia, the Party pledged their support to the Czechs as the Soviet Union unsuccessfully called for an anti-Nazi Front. The Party begged British and French leaders to reject Hitler's demands upon Czechoslovakia and heaped shame upon those men who met at Munich. In that last sad year before Hitler invaded Poland, it was the French Communist Party which called so often for the defense of Poland and the formation of an Anglo-France-Soviet Alliance to stop the march of Hitler in Europe. The alliance never was formed and World War II was fought in Europe to crush the ever-expanding power which was Hitler's.

The French Communist Party was clearly a complete failure in foreign policy during this era. Its desires rarely saw fulfillment. Why? Because, first and obviously, the Communist Party was not strong enough to impose its will upon the Government. And secondly, because the Communist Party was strong enough to cast fear into the hearts of its political opponents so as to make these opponents shun any course of action favored by the Communists.

The Communist Party in France was radical; it was noisy; it was militant. It openly admired a foreign power which since the Revolution of 1917 was sorely distrusted and despised by the majority of Frenchmen. The Communist

Party in 1934-1935 suddenly stole the anti-German thunder away from the right-wing Frenchmen who, in their attempt to disassociate themselves from the Communists, forced themselves into becoming pro-German and pro-Nazi. We have seen that the parties of the Left, notably the Socialists and the Radicals, in their anti-fascist zeal and in the hope of righting the social disorders of France, formed the Popular Front with the Communists. But the coalition lasted, for all practical purposes, for only eighteen months. One of the main reasons for its lack of success as a Front of the Left was that the Communists were such disreputable bed-fellows. Socialists and Radicals found themselves embarrassed too much and too often by the Communists. Whether they desired it or not, the Communists were identified with the terrible wave of strikes in France, with the atrocities of the Spanish Reds, with the Russian purges, with dying for Danzig and finally with the Soviet-Nazi Pact. Their advocacy of Soviets everywhere, even to the display of a flag for a Soviet France, was too much to tolerate. As a result, even the French Left had to move Right to stay clear of the Communists. This was the real influence of the French Communist Party-- anti-Communist forces of all political descriptions were forced to the Right, and gave the Third French Republic a foreign policy which was not only Rightist but so anti-

Communist that it became an appeasing, weak, ineffectual policy which relied upon Great Britain for complete guidance.

Jean-Marie Domenach, in his essay on French Communism¹ makes a most interesting comment about the French Communist Party in the post-World War II days of the late 1940's. He states that communism and anti-communism divided France in such a way that anti-communism, "by a sort of internal logic moves progressively toward the right." Then he adds:

The dialectic of Communism and anti-Communism makes impossible the existence of a non-Communist left which will not be absorbed by the Communist Party or forced toward the right. This dialectic has greatly facilitated the Communist party's effort to monopolize the forces of the left.²

True! And in the same manner, it appears that the French Left of the late 1930's recoiled from the communists and advocated or tolerated policies of which they otherwise might not have dreamed.

It seems reasonable, then, to make this assumption: if the Communist Party in France during the years 1934-1939 had been insignificant, then:

¹ Marie Einaudi, Jean-Marie Domenach and Aldo Garosci, Communism in Western Europe (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1951), p. 146.

²
Ibid.

1. The French nationalists would have continued to be nationalists to the consternation of Hitler.
2. The French conservatives would have remained conservative, but they would have been deprived of their anti-Left ammunition supplied by the vocalizations and machinations of the French Communist Party. Some conservatives would have chosen fascism as a solution to domestic problems, but on the other hand, fascism would not have been supposed as the only alternative to the communist threat.
3. The French Centre could have recognized the wisdom of domestic social reforms in France. They would not have confused social justice with surrendering to the Communists to the extent that they did.
4. The French Radical-Socialists could have found more common ground with the S.F.I.O., unembarrassed by the Communist association.
5. The Socialists under Leon Blum, could have enjoyed more respect, more confidence from the French people. They could have adopted a policy of aiding the Madrid government without fear of fascist-or Rightist-inspired insurrection in France. Or, their pacifist beliefs could have permitted them to adopt the policy of non-intervention without apologizing for it.
6. The Popular Front coalition could have adopted a firm policy toward Germany; could have taken seriously and strengthened the Pact with Russia. The coalition could very well have relied upon Great Britain for the lead in foreign policy but it would not have had to bear the burden of pleasing the Tories by frustrating their own Communists associates.

The foreign policy of the French Republic would have been different if the Communists had been weaker, if they had been less important.

I. FAILURE OF THE FRANCO-SOVIET PACT

The Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance is a prime case in point which deserves special attention. This pact was born of fear of Germany on the part of both France and the Soviet Union. The Pact was clearly anti-German. Litvinov's policy of collective security and France's desire for a complete alliance system which would hold Germany in perpetual check set the conditions for a renewal of the old Franco-Russian Alliance. Although the Pact of 1935 was no real substitute for an Eastern Locarno, it was seen as the seed which could possibly grow into something which could take the place of an Eastern Pact. The Soviet Union sought to become the ally of the greatest power in Europe and hence deter German aggression, while the France of Louis Barthou sought to gain Soviet assistance, render the revival of Rapallo impossible, and bolster her Polish and Czech allies. But Barthou did not live to make this an instrument of French foreign policy. In the critical years between his death and World War II, the Quai d'Orsay was occupied by men, like Laval, Delbos and Léger who did not look to a Russian connection of the vigorous type.

The Franco-Soviet Pact of 1935, the work of the nationalist and conservative that was Barthou, could perhaps have prevented World War II if the Pact had been firmly applied and implemented by both parties. From all indications the Russians took the Pact rather seriously. The Soviet Union warned repeatedly between 1935 and 1939 that if the West failed to take advantage of Moscow's willingness to collaborate in the organizations of collective security, it might soon be too late. It was France who chose to make the Pact weaker than the Russians had hoped and who refused to take meaningful and concrete steps to give the Pact the strength and power to deter Hitler.

But France hesitated and nothing was ever done to make the Pact a strong connection, even in the military sense. There were several reasons for this. First of all it must be admitted that France, from the days of Barthou and Laval, had been striving for links with Italy as well as Russia. After the Abyssinian crisis shattered the Franco-Italian detente of 1935, France was left with Russia alone, and this state of affairs tended to be rejected by latent French prejudices against Russia. Secondly, Britain was never enthusiastic over the Pact. France constantly feared that any strengthening of the

Pact might be viewed by Britain as a violation of Locarno and cause a British withdrawal from it. The growing power of the French Communist Party increased British suspicions and led the French Government to resist endangering the British guarantee. And finally, it was the surprising gains made by the Communist Party in 1936 which scotched the chances of making the Pact a powerful instrument of deterrence or punishment.

It has been mentioned that the presence of the Communist Party in such strength tended to drive all political factions further to the right. It seems also to be true that anything associated with the Communists became tainted or infected with the stench of communism. To a large degree, this is what happened to the France-Soviet Pact. Such a Pact in the hands of conservatives roused the suspicions of only a few. But in the hands of a Popular Front Government which owed such a large degree of support to the Communists, such a Pact was almost intolerable as a scrap of paper, much less as a Pact strengthened by military conventions. For this reason, the French Foreign Office and the French Government after 1936 chose not to broach the matter. The Communists were enough trouble already.

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This Communist publication gives selected documents which place the Soviet Union in a favorable light.

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II. RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY 1934-1941

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Cachin, Marcel. The Fight for the People's Front in France. Report of the VII World Congress of the Communist International. London: Modern Books, Ltd., [1935].

A pamphlet featuring Cachin's speech to the Congress. Noteworthy because it mirrors the Communist fear of German and Italian fascism.

Marty, André. For Peace! For the Defense of the Soviet Union. Report of the VII World Congress of the Communist International. London: Modern Books, Ltd., [1935].

A pamphlet featuring Marty's speech before the body. Demonstrates the French Communist support of the Franco-Soviet Pact, but with Marty's reservations on credits for war.

_____. Who Betrayed France. New York: Workers Library Publishers, Inc., 1940.

Contains the Manifesto of the French Communist Party which accuses Daladier and Bonnet of sabotaging the Franco-Soviet Pact, thereby leading France into war.

_____. The Trial of the French Communist Deputies. London: Lawrence and Wishart, Ltd., 1941.

An interesting publication in that it contrasts sharply with the pre-September 1939 dicta of the French Communist Party in regard to the defense of Poland. The publication roundly defends the Soviet-Nazi Pacts of August and September 1939.

VII Congress of the Communist International. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939.

An abridged transcript of the Congress which met in July-August, 1935.

Thorez, Maurice. The Successes of the Anti-Fascist United Front. Report of the VII World Congress of the Communist International. London: Modern Books, Ltd., [1935].

Features the speech of the Secretary of the French section of the Communist International at the Congress.

_____. France Today and the People's Front. Trans. Maile Burns. London: Victor Gollancz, 1936.

Written before the elections of 1936, this publication gives Thorez's account of the formation and platform of the People's Front.

_____. France of the People's Front and Its Mission in the World. New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1938.

A speech given on 26 December 1937. Notable in that its tone is more patriotic than many of the works from the French Right of the time. Thorez spells out the need for a democratic foreign policy and the means thereto.

_____. Son of the People. Trans. Douglas Garman. New York: International Publishers, 1938.

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3. Newspapers

L'Humanité, September 20, 1938-August 24, 1939.

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C. STUDIES AND MEMOIRS OF THE PERIOD

1. Books and Pamphlets

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A pamphlet which is very anti-Communist but sympathetic to Italy and Germany. It points to Madrid as a mirror for France and warns of the consequences of a Loyalist victory.

_____. Staline Contra l'Europe. Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1937.

Concerns the writer's view of a Communist plot to take over France. A good sample of the Right's fear of the Communists.

Churchill, Winston S. Step by Step 1936-1939. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1939.

A collection of Churchill's essays written during the period. Significant in that it expresses no fear for the safety of France due to a Communist menace.

_____. The Gathering Storm. Vol. I of The Second
6 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company,
1948-53.

Churchill's account of the virtuous motives, inertia and timidity on the part of the West which muddled "hundreds of millions of humble folk into total war."

D'Ormesson, Wladimir. France. Trans. F. Lewis May.
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This work gives a rather sober account of the influence of the French Communists on the foreign policy of the period. The author seems convinced that there was a distinct danger of France becoming Moscow's alter ego due to the number of Communists in the Government majority but he felt that France had succeeded in warding off that danger.

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Fraser, Geoffrey, and Thadée Natanson. Leon Blum, Man and Statesman. New York: J.B. Lippencott Company, 1938.

A favorable biography of Blum which castigates the Conservatives of the French Senate more than the Communists. This work tends to show that Blum's government was not especially fearful of the Communists although it does indicate those instances where the Communists made trouble for Blum.

Gunther, John. Inside Europe. Revised war edition.
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An account of the deterioration of France with heavy criticism of the French Right.

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Although concerned mostly with the first year after the beginning of the war, it provides some insight into the popular feeling prevalent in France prior to the war.

Torres, Henry. Pierre Laval. Trans. Norbert Guterman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1941.

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Werth, Alexander. France and Munich. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939.

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. The Twilight of France 1933-1940. Edited with an Introduction by D.W. Brogan. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942.

This work is a slightly abridged compilation of the author's The Destiny of France, France and Munich and the epilogue of The Last Days of Paris which were out of print at the time of publication. Together, the above works in one volume present as complete a picture of the decline of France as is available in the English language.

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A 1935 look at the just-signed Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance.

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A thoughtful study on why France would not strengthen her connection with the U.S.S.R.

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IV. STUDIES PUBLISHED AFTER THE PERIOD

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Albrecht-Carrié, René. France, Europe and the Two World Wars. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961.

An excellent account of diplomacy between the wars, with emphasis on the role of France and her gradual decline to that of being the object of pressures from without.

_____. A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1958.

A recognized, comprehensive text of European diplomatic history which was used as a general reference text in the preparation of this thesis.

Carr, Edward Hallett. German-Soviet Relations Between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951.

A useful text for cross-referencing events in France with those relations between Germany and the Soviet Union.

_____. International Relations Between the Two world Wars 1919-1939. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1963.

A delightful, excellent, yet short account of the inter-war period which was used frequently in the preparation of the thesis to maintain a general picture of the historical events in the time studied.

Craig, Gordon A. and Felix Gilbert (eds.). The Diplomats 1919-1939. 2 vols. New York: Atheneum, 1963.

These texts contain some two dozen essays on the major diplomats and foreign policies of the major states during the inter-war period. Particularly useful were the studies on Litvinov, Léger and Coulondre.

Taylor, A.J.P. The Origins of the Second World War. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1961.

A study which denies that Hitler had a pre-conceived plan for the conquest of Europe but simply acted boldly and successfully as events unfolded. This text was useful as a background for this study in that it points up the theory that statesmen are too absorbed by events to conceive a system.

2. French History and French Communism

Atkinson, Littleton B. "Communist Influence on French Rearmament." Documentary Research Division, Research Studies Institute, Air University, December 1955.

This paper is a study of the opposition to French rearmament in the 1950's but it contains an excellent analysis on why Frenchmen join or vote with the French Communist Party.

Cameron, Elizabeth R. Prologue to Appeasement. Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942.

An excellent study of French foreign policy and an indictment against French fascists and proto-fascists who became the dupes of Hitler.

Cathala, Jean. They Are Betraying Peace. Moscow: Literaturnaya Gazeta, 1951.

This book, purportedly written by a convert to Communism, is a pitiful, yet unintentionally humorous diatribe on anti-Russianism as it existed in France before the war. According to this text, Britain and France bribed and black-mailed Hitler into attacking Poland, then Russia. Louis Barthou is considered the only non-Communist French patriot from 1934 until after the war.

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Fauvet, Jacques. Histoire du Parti Communiste Français. 2 vols. Evreux: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1964- .

Volume 1 is a comprehensive and objective history of the Party from 1917 to 1939. This text was of the utmost value in the preparation of this thesis.

Gagnon, Paul A. France Since 1789. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

A recent history of France with some good insights into the Popular Front era.

Guérard, Albert. France: A Modern History. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959.

This author gives no sympathy to the French Right for their conduct during the pre-war period, while he attributes little or no blame to the Communists.

Herbette, Francois. L'Experience Marxiste en France 1936-1938. Paris: Editions M. Th. Genin, 1959.

This author states that the presence of a large Communist delegation during the late 1930's created a terrible danger for France. By dividing the French energies, by turning parties against themselves and by systematic excitation, the Communists brought nothing but frustration to France.

Howard, John Eldred. Parliament and Foreign Policy in France. London: The Cresset Press, 1948.

A small section of this text treats the period under study. The author emphasizes the influence of internal politics and the reliance upon Great Britain in the determination of French foreign policy during the period.

In Search of France. Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.

An excellent collection of essays on France. Especially useful was Jean-Baptiste Buroselle's "Changes in French Foreign Policy Since 1945," which contained an excellent introduction covering the reasons for the fall of France in 1940.

Micaud, Charles A. The French Right and Nazi Germany 1933-1939. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1964.

Originally published in 1943 by Duke University, this text is a brilliant study of the French Right and how they became pro-fascist and pro-Hitler at the expense of French security because they were so frightened by Communism. One of the most valuable texts in the preparation of this thesis.

Rieber, Alfred J. Stalin and the French Communist Party 1941-1947. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962.

Although this author has written primarily on events subsequent to Hitler's invasion of Russia, his summaries of events leading to this date are excellent. Likewise, he makes some poignant observations on the frustrations of the French Communist Party to satisfy their own national desires in the face of contrary instructions from Moscow during the post-war period. It is believed that the Party had similar frustrations before the war.

Rossi, A. A Communist Party in Action. Trans. and ed. Willmoore Kendall. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947.

An excellent treatment of the French Communist Party 1939-1945, but also containing a summary of Communist activities from Munich to Hitler's invasion of Russia.

Saurez, Georges et Guy Laborde. Agonie de la Paix 1935-1939. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1942.

An anti-Soviet and pro-Vichy account of why France behaved as she did prior to the war.

Scott, William Evans. Alliance Against Hitler. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962.

A detailed and scholarly account of the France-Soviet Pacts of 1932 and 1935 which could have been written in 1936 as it makes no effort to tie the pacts in with the tragic events of the following three years.

Shirer, William L. Midcentury Journey. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952.

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Simon, Yves R. The Road to Vichy 1918-1938. Trans. James A. Corbett and George J. McMorrow. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942.

Another indictment of the French Right which abhorred the thought that a victory over the enemies of France could be at the same time a victory for Soviet Russia.

Thorez, Maurice. Pour L'Union. Paris: Editions Sociales, 1949.

A post-war French Communist publication which includes an abbreviated Communist version of why France declined in the years before the war.

Walter, Gérard. Histoire du Parti Communiste Français. Paris: Aimery Somogy, 1948.

A friendly treatment of the French Communist Party but it is not particularly detailed for the period 1934-1939. An excellent chronology of this period is given at the back of the book.

Willard, Germaine. La Drôle de Guerre et La Trahison de Vichy. Paris: Editions Sociales, 1960.

An after-the-fact, Communist version of French foreign and domestic affairs which led to defeat at the hands of Germany.

Zévaès, Alexandre. Histoire du Socialisme et du Communisme en France de 1871 à 1947. Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1947.

A comprehensive study of Socialism and Communism in France over a period of three-quarters of a century. Coverage of the 1934-1939 period is rather brief.

3. Foreign Relations and History of the U.S.S.R.

Adams, Arthur E. (ed.). Readings in Soviet Foreign Policy. Boston: D.C. Heath, 1961.

Frederick L. Schmun's article gives an interesting interpretation of the Soviet Union's attitude toward the West during the inter-war years.

Beloff, Max. The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1929-1939. 2 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1947-49.

A well annotated and objective work on Soviet Foreign policy prior to World War II. Both volumes were particularly useful in preparing this thesis.

Bouscaren, Anthony Trawick. Soviet Foreign Policy: A Pattern of Persistence. New York: Fordham University Press, 1962.

A 'protracted conflict' type study of Soviet foreign policy which draws freely from Seton-Watson and Borkenau. The author is of the opinion that Stalin began to move toward a pro-German orientation shortly after Anschluss and Blum's second resignation.

Cattell, David T. Soviet Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

A relatively recent assessment of Russia's involvement in the war in Spain. The early pages were useful to this writer in studying the involvement of France in that conflict.

Vernadsky, George. A History of Russia. Fifth edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.

An accepted and reliable text on the history of Russia from antiquity. Useful in this study as background and basic reference.

Werth, Alexander. Russia At War 1941-1945. New York: Avon Books, 1965.

After spending years in France, Reporter Werth went to the Soviet Union where he spent the war. The introductory pages of this work help fill the gap in understanding France-Soviet relations immediately prior to the war.

4. The Comintern and European Communism

Borkenau, Franz. European Communism. New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1953.

A well documented and exhaustive study of Communism in Europe. The author concludes that the French Communists began as early as 1936 to shuck off their association with the French Left and deliberately sought to achieve contact with the Right: the army, the bureaucracy, the church and the plutocracy who could hold on to a real pact with the U.S.S.R. and even with Germany.

Cattell, David, T. Communism and the Spanish Civil War. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955.

The author's earlier work on the Spanish Civil War. Likewise useful in examining the involvement of France.

Sinaudi, Marie, Jean-Marie Domenach, and Aldo Garosci. Communism in Western Europe. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1951.

Three essays by the three authors. The essay on 'The French Communist Party' by Jean-Marie Domenach is well presented but the coverage of the period 1934-1939 is minimal.

Foster, William Zebulon. History of the Three Internationals. New York: International Publishers, 1955.

American Communist Foster gives his interpretation of the Internationals.

McKenzie, Kermit S. Comintern and World Revolution. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.

A recent study of the workings, mostly present day, of the Comintern.

Hollau, Gunther. International Communism and world Revolution. Trans. Victor Andersen. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961.

A good text for background on the workings of the Third International.

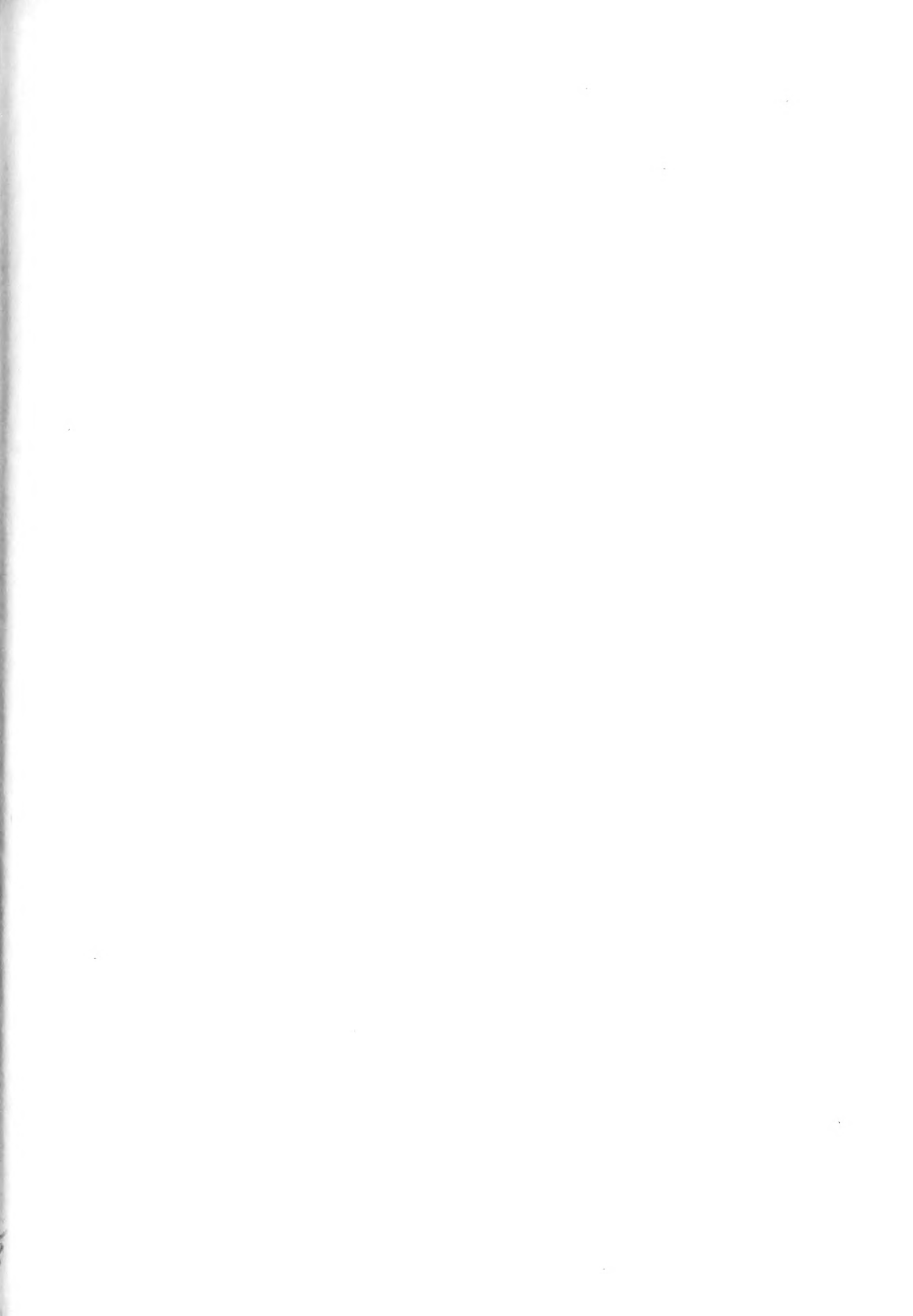
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Good coverage on the Popular Front tactic of Communism and its experience in France. The author concludes that Stalin would have achieved more unity and resistance to fascism if the extra-Russian Communist parties would have dissolved themselves. But such voluntary dissolution would have deprived Moscow of valuable experience needed later.

United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities. The Communist Conspiracy: Strategy and Tactics of world Communism. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956.

Part I, Section D, Communist Activities Around the World, contains many selected citations from texts otherwise difficult to obtain.





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